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FRENCH COLONIALISM IN ALGERIA: WAR, LEGACY, AND MEMORY

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Honors Council

For Honors in French and Francophone Studies

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A Short Historical Contextualization

In this thesis, I will investigate France's colonial past in North Africa, specifically in Algeria. The complex relationship between these two countries both during France's occupation and after decolonization, has had significant impacts on racial, religious, and nationalist tensions in France today. I argue increased xenophobia, islamophobia, and racism in France have stemmed from the failure on the part of society (in the realms of politics, education, religion, and economics) to address this historical legacy. I will examine the process of Algeria's liberation and France's efforts to thwart revolution, leading to the strenuous and long Algerian War (1954-1962). Today we can see many of the systems of discrimination that were in place in colonial Algeria recreating themselves in modern day France. These systems have been emboldened further by a national and global fear mongering in the wake of the recent Muslim extremist terrorist attacks in Paris, Nice, and many other European cities. The national and public reaction to these events and to France's current immigration dilemma is rooted in its current and former relationship with Algeria. In effect, I argue that Algerian colonial history defines and informs France's current national identity crisis and the rise of extreme right-wing hate groups.

During the late 1800s through the late 1900s, France was one of the great European imperialist powers. Its territories dotted the globe, and even today it is the country whose territories cover the most time zones in the world. North Africa, or the *Maghreb* (which includes Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia), was the site of some of France's most lucrative and close-to-home colonies. Algeria was considered "the door" to the Third-World and the "jewel" of France's territorial possessions. The colony was a site of mass trade and valuable in its natural resources and market opportunities. Algeria also became a perfect site for French tourism, with the appeal of "exotic" African adventures and the mystique of the

Muslim Kasbah. But rather than admitting to the real motivation behind the colonization and occupation of North Africa, French authorities proselytized *la mission civilisatrice*, or the narrative that France should bestow its civilization upon corners of the globe that were “less enlightened.” The teaching of “Frenchness” on the levels of language, culture, and history was central to this project and carried out through assimilation processes, both subtly and overtly. However, during the 1950s and 1960s, a worldwide anti-imperialist movement gained traction in many French colonial territories leading to a cascade of liberation movements. Anti-colonial literature and theory, in addition to news coverage of revolutions elsewhere, began to permeate Algerian society and spark revolutionary action.

The process of liberation was fraught with controversies and forced France to decide whether it considered its colonies a part of itself, or whether they were somehow separate, populated with individuals who were not considered full citizens of the Republic. In the 1960s, Algeria finally became an independent country and its decolonization would have long-lasting and irreversible effects for Algerians, for the *Pieds-Noirs* (French settlers living in Algeria), for Algerian migrants and their descendants who moved to, and now live in mainland France, and for the “purebred French” (*Français de souche*) who were and are still not ready to face an increasingly multicultural society largely resulting from colonial history. In addition, the crimes committed against humanity on both sides of the Mediterranean during the war led to an extremely rocky and bitter separation. On the world stage, France was criticized for its hypocrisy -- *the country of liberté, égalité and fraternité* could not exclude the rights of North Africans to independence, could not restrict the rights of Muslims, and could not murder and torture protesters, both at home and abroad. In metropolitan France, Algeria was criticized for its mutiny and violence -- many French citizens considered the revolution a betrayal of epic proportion in light of the many “benefits” France had supplied to North Africa.

Following independence, Algeria entered a period of instability and economic hardship leading to a wave of immigration to France. Algerian citizens, many of whom were francophone and understood French culture as part of their lives, left their country hoping to find opportunity in France. In addition, France invited members of its colonies to help rebuild its infrastructure after World War II, which had left it devastated. This immigrant population became the low paid work force needed in the metropole and as a result, its population of African Muslims began to increase. This has led to a strong association between Algeria and immigration in France proper, particularly in Paris, where many immigrants seek work. This increase in diversity has in turn exacerbated deep-seated xenophobia focused on a replacement of “French identity” due to an influx of “Arabs” and a clash between *laïcité* (secularism) and visible religions such as Islam. In France, religion is legally restricted from the public sphere -- a concept of freedom *from* religion which allows for citizens to worship how they choose, but only in private settings. One has but to look as far as French headlines over that past decade to get a sense of the multitude of identity debates surrounding the Islamic headscarf, “burkinis,” and non-pork alternatives in French public schools. In recent decades many have asked, is it possible to be Muslim *and* French? Is it possible to be African *and* French? But in reality, these questions have been asked since the beginning of the French colonization of Africa and have gone unanswered and avoided for over a century. Thus, the aim of this project is to move towards the end of that evasion. Some of the most important historical events that help us understand our societies today, are those which are omitted and ignored rather than those held in the spotlight. There is often more to be said about the active erasing of historical memory and what that indicates, than about mainstream historical narratives. In France, historical memory permeates current events and social conflicts, and it is important to understand from what time and national moment that memory springs. Most

importantly France's colonial history clashes with its republican tradition which laid its foundation after the French Revolution of 1789.

Existing Literature

Starting in 1990s and early 2000s, French and Maghrebin scholars began approaching the subject of colonialism in Algeria from a new perspective. While provocative histories of the Algerian war were written very promptly after its conclusion, analyzing the topic saw a lull in the 1970s and 80s as the French government attempted remedy the ruptures of the 60s. However, it became clear that the area of study needed revisiting and that it was in danger of passing out of public knowledge and schools. Scholars like Benjamin Stora, Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Blancel, Mohammed Harbi, Étienne Balibar, and Rachid Mokhtari began drawing connections between colonialism and rising inequality in France. These scholars have explored the concepts of identity, memory, historiography, and nationalism to better understand issues of immigration and citizenship. Their work challenges narratives that once sanitized France's colonial influence in Algeria and demands that the country recognize its undeniable legacy. Specifically, two new collections of articles and essays, *The Colonial Legacy in France: Fracture, Rupture, and Apartheid* (2017) in addition to *Colonial Culture in France Since the Revolution* (2013), have had enormous impacts on the way that the current influence of French colonialism is perceived. However, while this body of knowledge that seeks to tell the suppressed stories of French Algeria is successfully growing, it is still relatively new and controversial. Consequently, many French government officials believe that it should be kept out of the classroom, which contributes to a continuing disconnect between the banlieue riots and terrorist attacks that are happening today in France and the oppression and violence that once existed in Algeria. The goal of my thesis is to add to the

rising tide of literature which seeks to spark a widespread movement and discussion about the lingering impacts of colonialism in Algeria.

A Brief Overview of Analytical Structure

In chapter one of my analysis, the “Era of Subjugation,” I will explore and give context to the history of French settlement and conquest in Algeria. I will focus on how the French imposed a “civilizing mission” on the colony in addition to philosophies surrounding the “modernity” of Africa. I investigated these projects through researching the many methodologies used by the French government and army to weave “Frenchness” into the everyday experiences of Algerians. Through the use of primary and secondary literature I will illustrate the motivations behind the invention of the civilizing mission as well as the economic pull factors that drew the French state to Algeria. Trade, labor exploitation, and exotic tourism were also significant factors that influenced French domination. Chapter one will be important for my third chapter which will demonstrate how a lot of these systems have been recreated today in mainland France and are now affecting descendants of Algerian immigrants and the resident North African population at large. Active neocolonialism, stemming from the origins of the civilizing mission, is at the epicenter of France’s current immigration crisis.

In chapter two I will dive into a time period of increasing conflict in Algeria which followed the colonizing process. This will be specifically centered on issues of citizenship and equality that arose as France named Algeria an extension of itself. I will touch upon both World Wars and how they affected the growth of a nationalist Algerian movement that began to call for independence. Chapter two will also give a history of the Algerian War itself, especially in terms of the crimes committed by the French state in the colony in an attempt to maintain order. It is crucial to analyze all these historical pieces in order to understand the

development of the events and ideologies that shaped decolonization and the movement towards a neocolonial French state.

In my third and final chapter, I will focus on the effect the Algerian War had on France, both during the time period of decolonization and today. This background will be important in examining the resulting historiography that was produced and disseminated both in French schools and the media. I will then move on to analyze the terrorist attacks that have taken place recently in France starting with the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting of 2015. I aim to explain how these terrorist attacks have been misunderstood and misinterpreted by the public through a lens of xenophobia and islamophobia which stems from the Algerian colonial era. Rather than viewing these recent acts of terrorism as somehow naturally and unilaterally associated with Muslim culture and faith, I instead frame these events as a consequence of a deeply rooted resentment for three generations worth of cultural exclusion.

Finally, my conclusion will explore how the history of French colonialism has been systemically forgotten and how it is only recently that this lack of commemoration is being challenged by French historical discourse. This section will focus on projects that are currently being put in place to aid the effort of speaking this history into existence to avoid further colonial prejudice and amnesia. To begin however, it is necessary to be grounded in the concept of “universal Republicanism” which plays a key role in how the French state frames its national image.

The Paradox of Universalism as a Colonial Tool

Since the Age of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution of 1789, France has brandished its historical ideologies of universal rights and republicanism with enthusiasm. In particular, the philosophy of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*, has a legacy unlike any radical proclamation in its history. However, I argue that the initial and

fundamental concepts of French republicanism, have since been co-opted, manipulated, and utilized to actually form a paradoxical system that departs from the document's original goals. French republicanism claims as its pillars universal equality, secular natural law, the right and expectation of political participation of citizens, freedom of speech, and above all, a belief in the absolute power of the voice *du people*.¹ The canonization of these concepts was, and still is, one of the most influential historical flashpoints in the Western world. Liberty, equality, and fraternity became synonymous with French political and social thought, developing into one of the most adamantly defended national identities in Europe. However, these French values quickly became corrupted following the Revolution of 1789 through their utilization to validate colonial imperialism, effectively rendering *les droits de l'homme* inaccessible to specific French citizens or subjects. In an attempt to spread the enlightenment of "civilization," the French nation state drifted from its revolutionary roots grounded in universal equality, to create what became known as the Second Empire. The resulting colonial regimes presented oppressed native populations with "the image of 'France the colonizer' which coexisted uneasily with 'France of the Rights of Man.'"² Where article one of the declaration had affirmed, "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights," many Malagasy, Tunisians, Moroccans, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Algerians found themselves excluded from its narrative.³

In reality, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* was, in all its irony, used as a selective document that privileged only certain ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups, and certainly did not welcome women into the world of universal participation.⁴ In fact, as France began its "civilizing mission" in Northern Africa during the early 1800s, it

¹ Van Kley, Dale K. *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of the Rights of 1789* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1994), 10.

² Evans, Martin and John Phillips, *Algeria Anger of the Dispossessed* (Yale University Press, 2007), 27.

³ Van Kley, Dale K. *The French Idea of Freedom*, 10.

⁴ Prochasson, Christophe, Vincent Duclert, and Edward Berenson. *The French Republic: History, Values, Debates* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2011), 104.

was wielded as justification for the subjugation of “lesser peoples” who needed to be saved by knowledgeable, modernized Frenchmen. The Second Empire was launched and framed as a humanitarian mission that, underneath its guise, was a venture to bolster a sense of French glory. The resulting relationships with North African countries fostered by the French metropole, would eventually transform into tense revolutionary movements modeled after the promises of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*. In particular, Algeria would prove to be a perplexing problem with regard to the civilizing mission and France’s ideologies of assimilation. Of all of France’s North African colonies it was Algeria that would become so irreversibly entangled in French identity during its 132 years under the Republic (the longest of all territories in the Maghreb), that even today the relationship can only be described through pages of analysis. Its early history of colonization is the bedrock of modern day tensions surrounding the question, *who is “French” and who is not?* While the French sentiment that expansion into Africa was a moral good during the 1800 and 1900s was a product of its time (widely shared across Europe), I argue that even with hindsight, the nation still refuses to acknowledge colonialism’s implications. Ever since the French state actively worked to create Algeria in its image, forcing the new colony to shed its own cultural and historical narrative, it has attempted to distance itself from all culpability in terms of colonial crimes against humanity. Instead it has endeavored to aggressively isolate itself into an exclusive cultural club from a people on whom it once forced its “rational civilization.” To understand how this progression transformed from an imperialist project to acute xenophobia and rejection, one must first look as far back as the invasion of Algiers.

Chapter 1: An Era of Subjugation: Conquering Algeria

Colonial Structure in the Early 1800s

In the early 1800s, France had fallen down the rung of European colonial powers. It had lost much of its North American territories, its influence in Egypt, and with the advent of the “scramble for Africa,” felt immense pressure to reassert itself as a dominating imperial force. In 1830, the opportunity for a display of power arose in the wake of a surging Napoleonic romanticism.⁵ Following an argument between the ruler of the Ottoman regency in Algiers and the French consul, France claimed justification to invade and blockade the city of Algiers. On May 10, 1830, a royal proclamation was made to the French soldiers who would depart for the invasion of Algiers as a reminder that the Algerian people had long suffered the oppression of the Turkish regime and would welcome them as liberators.⁶ To further prepare the crew of military men, most of whom had never previously set foot in Northern Africa, the Minister of War provided pamphlets and directives to guide them. It included key phrases in Arabic and Turkish, as well as a section on health that was written with the help of veterans who had served in the invasion of Egypt.⁷ The French soldiers were told 200,000 Arabs with a formidable cavalry would be awaiting them and to recall the bravery of their predecessors who had taken part in the Crusades. Many soldiers saw their objective as the mission of a Christian nation to overcome “a belligerent Islamic people.”⁸ Some were convinced of the prized economic benefits that would surely become attainable in Algeria, but *many* were indoctrinated with the notion of an inevitable outcome – the enhancement of French glory.⁹ The French navy swiftly took over the coastal towns of

⁵ Sessions, Jennifer E., *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 128-129.

⁶ Lorcin, Patricia M.E., *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, prejudice and race in colonial Algeria* (New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1995), 18-19.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

Algeria and implanted a military presence in the country that would stay there for more than a century.¹⁰ The widespread plundering and random murder that followed, began a long lasting pattern of exploitation and dehumanization of Algerian inhabitants at the hands of the French. What had begun as a military move aimed at saving a dying empire and boosting the grandeur of a nation, quickly became an economic and social project that would lead to an extremely complex colonial relationship between France and Algeria.

By 1831 France had conquered Algiers and began occupying the rest of the nation.¹¹ Just like the lucrative maritime colonies in the Caribbean, Algeria was first considered a promising territory for great trade wealth. Although French forces faced staunch Muslim resistance and war during the first years of their presence, the French government decided Algeria would also be a perfect location for French settlement. The decision was made in the wake of worldwide abolitionist movements which had begun to demonize former systems of colonization. The new system was focused on *peuplement et fertilisation*, or “peopling and fertilization.”¹² It was framed as an agricultural and expansionist plan that would not exploit native populations, but instead replace them with enlightened French citizens. This substitution took the form both of transporting French citizens to Algerian soil, but also the extermination of the parts of the local population which did not except French rule. It can be said that, “settler colonialism seeks to replace the natives on their land rather than extract surplus value by mixing their labor with a colony’s natural resources . . . Thus, the primary object of settler colonialism can be characterized as one of elimination.”¹³ The French never came to replace the Algerians, but rather supplanted themselves in all possible positions of power. The French government, army, and colonial settlers would eventually come to

¹⁰ Evans, Martin, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), 8.

¹¹ Benjamin Stora, *Algeria 1830-2000: A Short History* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001), 3.

¹² Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 182-183.

¹³ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 180.

successfully take over Algerian education, agricultural, religious, and political systems to support their needs.

When the French arrived in Algeria they discovered many differences between their own culture and those of North Africans -- differences they felt justified the implementation of systems of subjugation. Particularly, “in Algeria the French found Islam, against which France had long defined itself.”¹⁴ France characterized itself (and continues to do so) as a strongly Catholic, Gallic country at the time of Algerian colonization. Islam had been an enemy of the state for centuries, dating back to the Crusades, and to the French represented something archaic, backwards, and dangerous to European society. But, “the question was not, *how can one modernize that which is antithetical to modernity?*” In fact, the question the French asked was, “what mechanisms, strategies, and implements, can be used to defeat Islam and make civilization triumph.”¹⁵ One of those strategies was implemented in 1841 when Thomas Bugeaud became the governor of French territories in Algeria.¹⁶ He was tasked with putting down the resistance of Abd al-Qadir, the Islamic scholar who led the final collective struggle against French colonization in Algeria. The conflict between French military forces and local groups revolting against invasion, raged throughout the 1840s and led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands on both sides. This was due the fact that Bugeaud instituted a total war policy through which he intended to terrorize the Algerian people into submission.¹⁷ Molded into a Christopher Columbus-type figure, defined as a great explorer and pioneer, French history textbooks now “extol Bugeaud as the founding father of French Algeria” who overcame great odds for the benefit of his nation.¹⁸ “For Algerians, though, his

¹⁴ Hannoum, Abdelmajid, *Violent Modernity: France in Algeria* (Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2010), 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Hannoum, *Violent Modernity*, 19.

¹⁷ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 162.

¹⁸ Evans and Phillips, *Algeria Anger of the Dispossessed*, 29.

name lives as a byword for brutality,” and he remembered as one of the great engineers of genocide in Algeria.¹⁹

Thomas Bugeaud was born in 1784, the seventh child of a wealthy, land owning family on the rise. While his older brothers became honored members of the army and military, Bugeaud’s father told him he was destined for the clergy – a destiny that would never materialize.²⁰ His path was quickly thrown off course by the national eruption of revolution and the consequences of the Terror which took the heads of many aristocrats. Due to his family’s wealth, Bugeaud’s parents were arrested and slated for execution by the guillotine. Nevertheless, much to their son’s relief, they were saved by the downfall of Robespierre and were acquitted. The family used their new-found freedom to move to the French countryside, and as a result, Thomas Bugeaud spent much of his childhood in an agricultural environment where he cultivated a love of growing things.²¹ By the age of 20 however, he made the decision to volunteer for Napoleon’s Imperial Guard, where he would begin his long and tumultuous military career. By 1808 his duties plunged him into Napoleons’ Peninsular Campaign in Spain, which would inform his experiences and decisions later during his station in Algeria. Spain proved to be very hard for the French to control, rife with constant resistance and guerilla warfare. There, Bugeaud took part in savage repression offensives and learned how to “fight in the streets.”²² Through his dedication for the next six years, Bugeaud would consistently move up through the ranks and was named Colonel by King Louis XVIII after the fall of Napoleon.²³ However by 1818, Bugeaud was tired of the revolutionary instability of his country and its military campaigns and returned

¹⁹ Evans and Phillips, *Algeria Anger of the Dispossessed*, 29.

²⁰ Singer, Barnett and John Langdon, *Cultured Force: Makers and Defenders of the French Colonial Empire* (Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 50-56.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

home to France to his agricultural projects and to get married. But his hiatus from military life would not last long.²⁴

In the early 1830s, the life of Thomas Bugeaud took many momentous turns. Bugeaud won the favor of King Louis Phillippe, the monarch who coordinated the invasion of Algiers. Louis Phillippes placed him in the Algerian town of Oran with a garrison on troops following the army's initial military offensive.²⁵ Bugeaud's first project was submitting resistance forces in Oran to the French sword saying, "In war, it's war with all its consequences; one cannot make a *demi-guerre*."²⁶ Throughout his career, Bugeaud would continuously defend brutal tactics used in Algeria by giving accounts of the barbarous methods of his Arab enemies, who he said often cut off the heads of French prisoners.²⁷ The terroristic tactics he employed were termed *razzia* (or raids) which involved scorched-earth methodologies such as raiding villages, public decapitations, and widespread sexual violence towards native women.²⁸ The relentless clashing between resistance forces organized by Abd al-Qadir and French military personnel, as well as the targeting of civilians, had staggering consequences - "By the mid-1850s, war and economic disruption had reduced the Algerian population to almost half its precolonial size, from about 4 million to 2.3 million."²⁹ As a result, Bugeaud was able to effectively crush all organized Algerian resistance by force, but had used the aid of a very instrumental intelligence agency.

The Construction of a Police State

Upon conquering Algeria, the French immediately established a government administration which was designed to oversee local affairs which became known as "*les*

²⁴ Singer and Langdon, *Cultured Force*, 50-56.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Singer and Langdon, *Cultured Force*, 72.

²⁸ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 163.

²⁹ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 162.

bureaux arabes” or the “Arab Offices”. The organization was designed to collect demographic information, create a knowledge base of cultural customs and public morality, to understand local and general law, and to study tribal factions. But the bureau’s most important role was its goal to create a large archive that would contain local histories and assets, allowing it to keep all the information gathered in one collection.³⁰ This was thought to be the best methodology through which to infiltrate native society and consolidate French influence. Most of the officers and members that made up the organization had graduated from mostly military academies and were suddenly transformed into makeshift anthropologists and sociologists. Their work effectively framed an entire nation as stuck in a more barbaric time. Many of these men considered themselves to be “arabophile” and saw as their goal the improvement of colonial society.³¹ This took the form of modernizing projects or tangible advancements made “through the construction of houses and public utilities, such as fountains, wells, public baths and markets.”³² However the reports describing how such “enhancements” of Algerian society were received by locals, or more commonly rejected, are riddled with judgements passed by the officers. As a result, regardless of its humanitarian mission, the documents of *les bureaux arabes* form an assortment of statistical and human records, accompanied by repeated paternalistic condemnations. This system not only allowed for the French to understand how to use indigenous cultural information against Algerians themselves, but it also allowed the state to inventory resources that could be useful to it. An entire section of the archive was dedicated to detailing the property of locals including names, houses, animals, access to water, and local markets.³³ This made it easier for French officials to find methodologies to dispossess locals of their property. Local political and

³⁰ Hannoum, *Violent Modernity*, 21.

³¹ Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*, 80.

³² Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*, 79.

³³ Abi-Mershed, Osama W., *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2010) 83.

revolutionary knowledge was also stored in *les bureaux arabes* that eventually became the most destructive to native populations.

These documents contain local knowledge. Colonial interest in what the population thought of the French, the motives for the revolt, and the intentions of the insurgents - and their whereabouts, tactics, and alliances.³⁴

These damaging sources were provided both by Algerians who were loyal to the French and also by religious and tribal leaders of the groups that opposed them in exchange for empty promises. The infiltrative efficiency of *les bureaux arabes* convinced General Bugeaud that its expansion into a military institution was potentially critical to his plan of dominance and Algerian submission.³⁵

While the officers of *les bureaux arabes* were not originally considered active members of the army, under Bugeaud's leadership they worked as its executive, domestic force. Each bureau worked within a geographical area known as a *cercle*, within which the system would oversee the policing and pacification of the local population.³⁶ Depending on the size of the city or region of the particular *cercle*, an army officer was assigned a team of bureau representatives who saw to almost all aspects of the administration of Islamic tribes. This included surveillance, the writing of regular reports, and even the overseeing of judicial proceedings.³⁷ As a result, the collection of information that the officers collected was utilized against Algerian insurgents, specifically in the *razzias* that followed Bugeaud's rise to power, even insofar as actively turning local factions against each other in an attempt to confuse cooperation.³⁸ Perhaps the most infamous genocidal event under Bugeaud's leadership was the *enfumade* of the Ouled Riah tribe. In order to hide from French military forces, 500

³⁴ Hannoum, *Violent Modernity*, 95, 105.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*, 79.

³⁷ Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*, 79.

³⁸ Hannoum, *Violent Modernity*, 95, 105.

defenseless Algerian men and women took shelter in nearby caves. Upon discovery, the French army smoked the hiding “rebels” to death with the goal of forcing them out to be shot.³⁹ The violence became so extreme that the French government sent a commission to Algeria to investigate the brutalities committed by Bugeaud’s strategy of “total war” in 1846, bringing the widespread violence to an end.⁴⁰ One member of the investigative commission stated, “We have surpassed in barbarism the barbarians we came to civilize,” in response to the terror and destruction he found in Algerian villages.⁴¹ Following the release of the reports catalogued by this group of emissaries, there was an outcry against the invasion of Algeria among factions of French politicians. Many felt military forces should be pulled out of Algeria entirely and that certain members of command should be legally persecuted for ordering and permitting *razzias*. However, among those who condoned the violence perpetrated in Algeria, and even among those voices who condemned it, there was also a strong, common opinion that, “in the eyes of the world, such an abandonment would be a clear indication of our decline.”⁴² As a result, withdrawal was eliminated as a course of action. The chosen route would be expansion and the civilizing of Algeria, which was expected to be beneficial to the population which had already been terrorized by the army for a decade. The following transition from war to colonization took time as French officials constructed their plan for maintaining and furthering dominance in the region.

By the 1840s, pro-replacement colonialists, who had hoped to completely expel the Algerian people and to create an empty country ripe for the creation of a new European civilization, were forced to abandon their hopes. During the initial period of war following the invasion of Algiers, the cost of human life was heavier than expected. The French army

³⁹ Hannoum, *Violent Modernity*, 95, 105.

⁴⁰ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 171.

⁴¹ Stora, *Algeria*, 5.

⁴² Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 171.

had sacrificed more than 35,000 of its men and 340 million francs for the Algerian cause.⁴³ In addition, their political rivals who either rejected the colonial project all together, or who hoped to civilize native Algerians rather than kill them, condemned the loss of life among the indigenous population. They believed settler colonialism (with the declarations of the recent Revolution in mind) should and could be a more moral imperial project aimed at assimilation.⁴⁴ It was believed that Algeria could be the model for the “modern” colony, free from the smear of slavery and the “torment” of humanity. Thus, a focus on creating a settler society in Algeria, where new markets would provide tropical goods, new military strongholds in the Mediterranean, and new lives for France’s surplus population, took hold in French politics.⁴⁵ In the 1830s, France was facing an overpopulation crisis. Large cities were hit hardest as “the nation’s population had increased by almost 20 percent between 1801 and 1831.”⁴⁶ Cities like Paris, Lyon, and Marseilles suffered epidemics of crime, disease, and homelessness as their populations skyrocketed. Algeria appeared to be the perfect solution to the dilemma and a possibility to create a new agricultural economy within a reasonable distance from the metropole. Army expeditions spoke of large expanses of uncultivated and incredibly fertile lands that would be suitable to French families. Thus, the project of French settlement in Algeria began with the hopes of convincing hundreds of thousands of citizens to emigrate.

Les Colons: Building the *Pied-Noir* Identity

Algeria quickly became the Wild West of French culture following the initial invasion of Algiers. Many of the French citizens who emigrated there between the 1840s and 1880s left mainland France with the hopes of striking it rich quickly and were spurred on by a sense

⁴³ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 173.

⁴⁴ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 177-178.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

of adventure.⁴⁷ The promise of land, which the French army had reported was fertile and unoccupied, appeared to be an incredible opportunity to many poor working-class members of French society. One colonial advocate said that the prospect of an exodus of impoverished French families was in fact,

A great step towards the extinction of mendacity, even of pauperism, and thus would contribute a great deal to the security of the social order. Afterwards, there would be almost no more vagabonds or any of those lazy and penniless men always ready to sell their services to those seeking to disturb public tranquility.⁴⁸

Thus, the French government hoped to dump its destitute, suffering poor on Algeria and for the relocation of entire families to lead to the creation of a new agricultural powerhouse across the Mediterranean. To their disappointment, many unattached French men went to Algeria to become land speculators and entrepreneurs instead. As a result, in its early years Algerian colonial culture was extremely masculine. The colonists, also known as *colons* or *Pieds-Noirs* (Black Feet), began to build many cafes, inns, taverns, and wine shops.

Unsurprisingly, “drinking establishments quickly became the most numerous European-run business in Algeria”.⁴⁹ By 1837, alcohol was the largest colonial import and soon “those of the Algerian countryside were associated with drunken debauchery, sexual disorder, and crime,” in the metropole.⁵⁰ In addition, the preponderance of alcohol starkly contrasted the traditions of the local population, which often forbade its consumption under Islamic statutes. Overall, the imbalance of gender among the new colonists, the majority of which were men, led to stories of the indigenous sexual conquests. Thus, the myth of the “sexual looseness” of native women and the mystery of the Algerian Kasbah proliferated through the accounts of

⁴⁷ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 194-196.

⁴⁸ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 202-203.

⁴⁹ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 235.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

French orientalist writers who exoticized and eroticized the colony.⁵¹ For those colonists who did not chose an entrepreneurial route however, land speculation was the easiest avenue through which to make money and amass influence. Made easy by land acquisition statutes set forth by the army and the lack of knowledge of the French language among natives, many Frenchmen were able to swindle Algerians out of their land.⁵² In the confusion following invasion, *Pieds-Noirs* were able to strike unfair deals with the unwitting indigenous population who then became dependent upon their employment. Thus, not long after their arrival, a discernable hierarchy between French colonists and the local population formed, sowing the seeds for future conflict.

The Civilizing Mission is Implemented

Two years following the reports written by the investigative committee sent by Paris to investigate General Bugeaud's tactics, the Second Republic officially extended departmental status to its territories in Algeria.⁵³ As part as the government's plan moving forward, and in an effort to shift focus from the atrocities of invasion, "humanitarian" projects were proposed. This plan became known as *la mission civilisatrice*, or the civilizing mission. This design included the domination and "improvement" of all local realms, including academic, religious, economic, and political spheres. The mission functioned at its strongest in Algerian schools by wielding the power of indoctrination. Catholicism and French values were imparted in classrooms and taught to Algeria's youngest citizens. In fact, the natives that were funneled into the new education system were referred to by the word *évolué*, meaning evolved, showing how French-educated Algerian students were viewed in

⁵¹ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 236.

⁵² Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 242.

⁵³ Shepard, Todd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2006), xiii.

comparison to their almost “prehistoric” counterparts.⁵⁴ In addition to the education system, the French also aimed to dominate religious morality and practices in Algeria and attempted to degrade the cohesion of the local Islamic community. Islamic teachings, beliefs, and traditions were weeded out and discouraged. While not all of the population of Algeria was Muslim, the vast majority lived lives in which the traditional values of the Koran played a major role. Most of the domains the French wished to conquer were in some way influenced by Islam posing a formidable obstacle to France’s supposedly secular principles. Lastly, political and economic disenfranchisement were also important components of *la mission civilisatrice*. French political systems and the introduction of capitalist economic practices that defied Islamic doctrine were considered vital to the success and betterment of the Algerian people. Regardless of its positive pitch, each element of this plan would effectively contribute to the exaltation of the French way of life at the expense and disparagement of Algerian existence.

Teaching “Frenchness”: Colonial Education

The design of a French education in Algeria was built upon a foundation of ideologies proposed by an influential, post-revolutionary era philosopher. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, the intellectual Henri de Saint-Simon, published a number of works that would later define French education in Africa and also influence the role of *les bureaux arabes*. Saint-Simon’s theories envisioned a plan to rejuvenate society after the atrocities of the French Revolution of 1789 with a goal of implementing many Enlightenment era ideas.⁵⁵ In his work entitled *Lettres d’un habitant de Genève à ses contemporains*, he explained that he believed his project could successfully “replace the divisive social hierarchies of France with a more

⁵⁴ Gordon, David C., *North Africa’s French Legacy: 1954-1962* (Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1962), 4.

⁵⁵ Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity*, 26-27.

legitimate and conciliatory order.”⁵⁶ This “order” would, instead of distinguishing individuals based on their class or family heritage as during the *Ancien regime*, valorize individual industry. This included all scientific, moral, public, and academic works, thus defining the intellectual elite of the era as the new masters of society. In addition, while Saint-Simon saw industry and science as the new salvation for French society, he also believed in a universal Christian faith that would guide his conceptualized world.⁵⁷ Naturally, such a system, he proposed, would enhance the lower classes and proletariat of France through their association with elite intellectuals. This ideology could also be applied to the betterment of what he believed to be lesser races, who, Saint-Simon claimed, became improved by their exposure to European thought. While his theories were not widely acknowledged right after they were published, they were put into motion through the civilizing mission of Algeria. One of his apprentices, Prosper Enfantin, arrived in Algeria in 1839 and went on to implement Saint-Simon’s doctrines, greatly influencing the framework of colonial education.⁵⁸ Through that structure the French hoped to facilitate “intellectual and rational progress focused two main objectives” -- first that the acquisition of the French language was paramount and must be forced upon students, and secondly that the Arabic curriculum be completely expunged.⁵⁹ As Auguste-Alexis Lepscheux, inspector general for public instruction, said in 1832, “The Arabs, Moors and Jews will not become civilized but by the use of the French language; they will not be useful to us, and will not be sincerely gained to our cause until our idiom has become familiar to them.”⁶⁰ Education was a means to the ends of the subjugation and compliance which the French required of its colonial subjects, robbing Algerians of Arabic teachings. As French officials attempted “to seize the youth in its infancy,” Algerians lost the

⁵⁶ Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity*, 26-27.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity*, 234.

⁵⁹ Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity*, 59.

⁶⁰ Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity*, 59.

valorization of their native tongue and were made foreigners in their own country.⁶¹ Learning about Algerian culture and history was cycled out as if it had never been, in order to create a new generation of subjects loyal to France.

Twenty years later, the educational system became more complex and organized. On July 14, 1850 a concrete and restrictive blueprint for both primary and higher education was codified by a Presidential decree to be expedited by the Minister of War. It stated that in French Muslim schools for boys, the French language, elements of arithmetic, and the system of legal weights and measures were the sole necessary subjects. As for the girls, the curriculum was even more confining with all the same trappings as the male model, except for legal education which was aptly replaced by needlework.⁶² The decree was also split into chapters, the third of which outlined *Surveillance and Inspection*. All schools were by law inspected “by a civil servant or a French Officer” who was “assisted by an indigenous civil servant”, likely to make locals feel more at ease.⁶³ These monitors reported their findings to the Prefect of the city which was appointed by the French government who then passed the educational information up the ranks to the Minister of War. The French-Algerian education system thus became a military operation that transformed institutions of learning into policed spaces, managed by army officials for decades. But perhaps the most pointed colonial decision made to influence academics was the targeting of a particular demographic of student which became most important to architects of the French colonial education system. Specifically, the children of the elite wealthy members of Algerian society were provided access to *superior* French education in attempt to win them over to the cause of colonization. Some were even sent to prestigious schools in the metropole to become further “refined” by reason.

⁶¹ Gordon, *North Africa's French Legacy*, 11.

⁶² Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity*, 246.

⁶³ Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity*, 248.

One purpose of concentrating upon the elites of the colonial territories was, of course, to assure that the natural leaders of the colonies would feel sentimentally tied to metropolitan France and as a result prove to be politically loyal to France.⁶⁴

In this way the French guaranteed not only long-term influence in the colonies through tailored teachings, but also created a group of Algerians who supported their own servitude, thereby undermining their countrymen who opposed French occupation. Many of the descendants of these wealthy youth would go on to form the population of Algerians who opposed independence from France during the country's revolution, which would erupt a century later.

An Old Rivalry: French Catholicism vs Algerian Islam

However, the lessons taught by *la mission civilisatrice* in Algeria came in different forms and were not simply targeted at children. The French also embarked on a religious rebuilding in which they set standards and used demonstrations of power to remove Islam from daily life. Since the beginning of its colonial undertakings, France had always approached the conquering of foreign populations through the paternalism of Christianity. Not only was Catholicism the most dominant religion in the country, but it was also virtually synonymous with France itself. In a journal titled *Missions Catholiques* which documented the Christian "salvation" projects that were implanted in the French colony of Madagascar, Ferdinand Brunetiere aptly concluded that French missionaries do not differentiate between the words "French" and "Catholic."⁶⁵ The work of the missionaries was to free "imprisoned" and "oppressed" peoples from their superstitions and false religions, in turn converting "the *indigène* to the genius of our race." The identity of French imperialism grounded itself in

⁶⁴ Gordon, *North Africa's French Legacy*, 12.

⁶⁵ Daughton, J.P., *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2006), 250.

Catholicism and the belief that when paired with powerful republican ideas, that it could salvage infantile African populations from the depths of their ignorance. As in Madagascar, the religious mission waged by the French would not differentiate that which made Algeria Catholic from that which also made it French. As a result, Muslim families were told their children would be placed in schools where they would learn the moral superiority of Catholicism and that their spiritual landmarks would be taken from them. There were “frequent requisitions of mosques, shrines, and cemeteries -- and their subsequent demolition or conversion into French establishments” that the citizens of Algiers were hopeless to prevent.⁶⁶ In this way Algerians were shown that to be French was not to be Muslim and that they did not have full rights with regards to freedom of religion. In addition, any native Algerian suspected of following the Koran as his or her moral or legal compass in place of the secular, French Civil Code could lose their status as “French national.”⁶⁷ However this secular code was designed mostly to protect Catholic institutions the government did not want disturbed.

Certain Muslim practices informed how and why the French demonized Islam. Polygamy became a crime punishable by incarceration in the colony as it was considered a direct threat to the sacrament of marriage the Catholic Church guarded beyond all things. On the issue of Muslim practices of marriage Charles Richard, an officer of the Arab Bureau, stated:

Here is what the Arab people are: almost three million souls who live in the confusion of all the imaginable abominations, an orgy of all known immoralities, from the one of Sodom to the one of Mandarins. A man plunders and robs his neighbor. The latter

⁶⁶ Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity*, 62.

⁶⁷ Prochasson, Duclert, and Berenson, *The French Republic*, 227.

pays him back. He marries for women and runs after others. When he is strong, he eats the weak. When he is weak, he stabs in the back.⁶⁸

This concept of morality versus immortality is the dialectic through which the French church sought to clearly define Islam and Christianity, “Arab” and “French, as opposites. As another officer of the Arab bureau, Colonel Eugène Daumas, once put it, “Take a Frenchmen and an Arab and put them in a pot and let them boil on high together. After 24 hours, you will still recognize the Christian from the Muslim.”⁶⁹ Under the religious differentiation imposed by the French colonial regime, a demarcation of nationality was also drawn. Thus an association between Catholicism and French citizenship was made between locals. As a result, in an attempt to gain access to many of the rights European settlers enjoyed, many Algerians did convert to Christianity, or at the very least presented as adherents to the Catholic faith. Yet to their disappointment, they still did not automatically earn citizenship. Even by 1903 these individuals were still referred to by the Court of Algiers as “Christian Muslim natives” because “Muslim” was considered a title which Algerian natives could not shed by simply adopting Christ.⁷⁰ Many believed, as Colonel Daumas articulated, that when “boiled down” an Algerian was always a Muslim. Unfortunately, the French state would also use religion as a way to economically disenfranchise the native population of Algeria.

Economic Inequity in French Algeria

The dismantling of Muslim society did not end with the push of Catholicism or the criminalization of Islamic culture. Algerian Muslims became very vulnerable to economic ruin under the yolk of their colonial masters, and as a result suffered for basic necessities. Many were stripped of their farm lands for the use and profit of French settlers who began to

⁶⁸ Hannoum, *Violent Modernity*, 27.

⁶⁹ Hannoum, *Violent Modernity*, 26.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

arrive in larger and larger numbers between the 1840s and 80s.⁷¹ Upon arrival the French believed that Algerians were inherently lazy due to how they farmed the land, which the *mère patrie* termed inefficient. This was partially due to the fact that traditional Muslim society functioned through a tribal system of the communal sharing of lands. To more “effectively” use the land, the French instituted the 1844 Land Law which dictated that, “uncultivated land within specified areas was classified as vacant unless valid title deeds were provided to prove ownership.”⁷² Due to the lack of deeds as a result of religious and cultural practices, French officials easily seized local land. In order to further justify their hijacking of acreage, the French framed themselves as the productive saviors of wasted natural resources. Where agricultural lands were once used to provide food for Algeria’s native populations, the French decided to use them for “more lucrative” and “useful ventures,” such as producing wine which they could then trade with the metropole.⁷³ This changing of hands had its consequences.

Poverty rapidly grew among the native Muslim population of Algeria and famine became widespread as they were denied their “traditional forms of support, such as the setting aside of food for times of hardship.”⁷⁴ In 1867 alone, nearly three hundred thousand Algerian Muslims died from starvation, which new *Pied-Noir* landowners quickly blamed on the army.⁷⁵ This made many of the inhabitants more reliant on low-paying menial positions provided to them by French settlers, conversely increasing the production of European agriculture. This effectively created a master-slave relationship in the colony regardless of an absence of legal bondage. Islam, in addition to the French caricature of the Arab, became synonymous with pauperism, crime, and violence. Crime rates grew as starving, desperate

⁷¹ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 242.

⁷² Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*, 84.

⁷³ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 243.

⁷⁴ Evans and Phillips, *Algeria Anger of the Dispossessed*, 31.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Muslims resorted to theft, assault, and revolt to survive. In fact, “in 1868 the 600 colons of Medea were robbed on average four times each; annual losses through theft rose to a half a million francs.”⁷⁶ Naturally, settler populations reacted strongly, turning on Muslim “vagabonds” in the press creating a yellow journalism so fanatical that Muslims were even accused of cannibalism.⁷⁷ Thus as a result of the crippling of religious tribal traditions and practices both with regards to spiritual principles and community structure, the Algerian Muslim was reduced to the stereotypes he had been given. The prejudice of French civilizing mission effectively created a terrible cycle of self-validation.

Political Domination of the Colonist Population

The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*, which had defined the values of the French Republic did not exist in its original form in Algeria. For colonial populations it was selectively edited. *Indigènes*, or indigenous populations, occupied a precarious grey area between full citizens of the French Republic and second-class colonial subjects. In fact Algerian natives were left deliberately in “legal limbo for nearly two decades” following invasion as the French government grappled with its own internal contradictions as champions of universalism and as imperialist masters.⁷⁸ Finally in 1865 it was decided that while the annexation of Algeria gave inhabitants the status of “French nationals”, that indigenous populations were in fact *not* French citizens, legally allowing the state to refuse the benefits of civil and political rights.⁷⁹ In addition, the electoral and legal systems in Algeria were propped up by discriminatory practices which gave an illusion of local participation, but in reality ensured the political dominance of pro-colonialist ideologies. Due to the fact that the majority of the population did not have the right to vote (as Muslims were

⁷⁶ Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*, 87.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Prochasson, Duclert, and Berenson, *The French Republic*, 225.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

barred from participation), most local departmental councils were composed of almost entirely of male French settlers. In some years, as much as four-fifths of many legislative bodies in Algeria were French settlers, with a small Muslim contingent that was hand-picked by state officials who made their selection based on loyalty and socioeconomic class.⁸⁰ This made it essentially impossible to make any sort of legal reform to benefit local populations or Muslim tribes under the French regime. Unfortunately, as the population of French settlers continued to grow throughout the late 1800s, more and more unreasonable legal restrictions were placed on natives.

The infamous *Code de l'indigénat*, or the “Native Code” was established in 1881 and wouldn’t be repealed until fifty years later as a result of Algerian nationalist demands.⁸¹ The code made it legal for the state deal out penalties and fines to its greatest political threat with ease – the tightknit Muslim community.

The *indigénat* reached into every cranny of the Muslim majority’s life. Under its twenty-seven provisions Muslims were controlled by legislation right down to requiring permission to go on pilgrimage. They could be imprisoned for making rude remarks about French authority.⁸²

The statutes were designed to achieve full submission among the Muslim community of Algeria and to politically disarm them. The code declares that to hold public meetings, open schools, or own a weapon, the population needed permits and approval from the French government. The Native Code also mandated that upon refusing to provide transportation, food, water, or fuel to colonial administrators, locals could be punished.⁸³ The code worked so well in consolidating the political power and dominance of the resident European population, that France actually used it as a model for other colonies under its rule. Similar

⁸⁰ Evans and Phillips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, 33.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War*, 22.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

systems were put in place in Senegal, Cambodia, and Madagascar.⁸⁴ Among locals, the Native Code fostered strong resentment and a loathing of colonial hierarchy. But it also left many questioning how their identity was categorized. If Algeria was French, did that make Algerians French? And if not, how were they defined under the authority of the French Empire?

La crise d'identité : "The Muslim Question"

Through its project to establish a new France in Algeria while also defining itself against what was Algerian, the French state effectively created a widespread identity crisis among its subjects and colonial citizens. As a result of being forced to integrate French culture into their daily lives and social existence while also being simultaneously framed by the French stereotype of the "Arab," native Algerians found themselves occupying a no-man's land of existence. As Mouloud Feraoun wrote in the early 1900s in *Le Journal*,

When I say that I am French, I give myself a label that all Frenchmen refuse to give me. I express myself in French, I was educated in French schools. I know as much as the average Frenchman. But who am I, for heaven's sake? Is it possible that, as long as labels exist, I don't have one? Which is mine? Tell me who I am!⁸⁵

The projected perspective of the colonizer was that the Algerian people were not a mix of France and Algeria, but instead were neither. This isolation that allowed for the easy othering the native population, further justified segregation and hierarchy imposed by the settler presence in Algeria. As understood through Feraoun's words, many Algerian citizens did not believe that their identities had been given to them or created by the French, but rather

⁸⁴ Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, 23.

⁸⁵ Dunwoodie, Peter. *Assimilation, Cultural Identity, and Permissible Deviance in Francophone Algerian Writing of the Interwar Years* in Lorcín, Patricia. *Algeria & France, 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia* (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2006), 63.

withheld.⁸⁶ Following colonization, the children of Algerian families were referred to as *la deuxième génération*, or “the second generation”, as if the Algerian people hadn’t existed before the arrival of the French.⁸⁷ Many members of this second generation and the subsequent youth of the late 1800s and early 1900s, would instead of understanding themselves as outside of an erased Algerian history or an invasive French present, identify as both. Thus, the crisis of *la question indigène* was born into Algerian literature and French discourse. The question probed whether it was at all possible to be both Muslim and French, both indigenous and French, and both non-European and French.

With the advent of World War I and the massive casualties produced by newly mechanized warfare, the man power of all Francophone territories was called upon to fight on the fronts and in the trenches. About 170,000 Algerian men fought for French forces in The Great War, making up part of *L’armée d’Afrique* which also included men from Morocco and Tunisia.⁸⁸ These soldiers became the poster children for French colonial propaganda, representing the most loyal and dedicated of *indigènes*. Many joined the ranks because they expected to receive full recognition as French citizens, finally bringing the question of their identity to an end. Others joined simply out of destitution and the need for wages and food.⁸⁹ However by 1914 when the war began, groups who staunchly opposed the supporting of French colonial structures in all their forms began to organize as well. Specifically, traditional Muslim factions encouraged against Algerian participation in the French army with the belief that the indigenous population should not die for changes that may never come and for a state that vilified Muslim culture.⁹⁰ Unfortunately, these organizations proved correct as Algerian rights saw little change at the war’s end, even for veterans. However, in

⁸⁶ Dunwoodie, *Assimilation, Cultural Identity, and Permissible Deviance, Algeria & France*, 63.

⁸⁷ Naylor, Phillip C. *France and Algeria: A History of Decolonization and Transformation* (Florida, University Press of Florida, 2000), 7.

⁸⁸ Evans and Phillips, *Algeria Anger of the Dispossessed*, 37.

⁸⁹ Evans and Phillips, *Algeria Anger of the Dispossessed*, 37.

⁹⁰ Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization* 38.

1919 there was a call for the automatic naturalization of Algerian veterans both within the colony and in some political circles in the metropole – there was even talk about extending full citizenship to all Algerian men. But the proposals were shut down by the majority in the French government out of a fear of being “engulfed, drowned in the mass . . . submerged in a new race.”⁹¹ As a result, the Algerian man could not even fully claim the identity of “French” veteran as it was also kept out of his reach. In response, discontent grew in the colony among native groups who began to form new cultural and political groups motivated to work towards increased autonomy and legal reform. The French government, in an effort to appease this concerning rise in indigenous organization instated a new law in 1919 to make achieving citizenship more attainable for Algerian men with Koranic civil status as a concession.⁹² However, this was not enough to stay the progression of what would become the foundation of a nationalist Algerian movement.

The Early Civilizing Mission in Conclusion

Under the guise of a humanitarian project, the goal of the civilizing mission was to negate Algerian existence as it had been understood before the arrival of the French. Through invalidating Algerian cultural and social practices in terms of economics, religion, and education, the French were able to best consolidate power in their new territory. In addition, through the civilizing mission, the French were able to give labels and stereotypes to the local population, making it possible to frame the system as charitable, working in favor of the less fortunate masses of Africa. By illustrating Algeria’s “backwardness” and its potential to resemble an “enlightened” European country, the French government was able to justify its

⁹¹ Dunwoodie, *Assimilation, Cultural Identity, and Permissible Deviance, Algeria & France*, 63.

⁹² Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 38.

own self-serving agendas as beneficial. As Frantz Fanon wrote, the philanthropic presentation of the civilizing mission is both necessary and successful because,

The colonist is not content with stating that the colonized world has lost its values or worse never possessed any. The “native” is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values.⁹³

The “native” is thus in need of correction in his Islamic fanaticism and feeble-minded in his knowledge of French capitalism according to his European master. He is ignorant in his lack of knowledge of the French language and moral customs. In addition, Fanon seeks to point out that regardless of the proclaimed project of the civilizing mission to make the native “better,” the native is also simultaneously framed as fixed, immovable in his shortcomings. This renders the perpetual presence of the colonizer essential in all spheres of colonial life. To show the world the benefits of the “good works” designed to right the wrongs of Algeria, France organized a celebratory event on the centennial anniversary of the invasion of Algiers. The 1931 Colonial Exposition of Paris was coordinated not only to glorify the civilizing mission at the apex of the Second Empire, but also to unify the French nation at a time when some began to question the mission’s good intentions.

⁹³ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 6.

Chapter 2: The World Wars and the Revolution for Independence

The State of Colonial Affairs and the Colonial Exposition of 1931

During the interwar period of the 1920s and 30s, colonial consciousness both in Algeria and in hexagonal France began to change. In light of the global changes brought forward by the Russian communist revolution of 1917, radical political parties seeking to destroy all forms of social hierarchy gained popularity across Europe. Meanwhile, across the Mediterranean Algerian reform groups who sought more autonomy from European rule began to assemble, like the Young Algerians and the Association of Algerian Ulema.⁹⁴ In France newly invigorated communist and socialist coalitions clashed with lasting imperialism, which sought to continue to uphold the Republic's reputation as a powerful empire. The interwar period thus became a crossroads of conflicting ideologies and an era of flux that left the colonial situation of Northern Africa all the more complex. By far the best illustration of an attempt to unify the French public under a shared identity during this time period is the Colonial Exposition of 1931, staged on the outskirts of Paris. This spectacle, created to display the prowess of the French Empire, was advertised with slogans like, *Visit Greater France* and *Around the World in One Day*.⁹⁵ The exposition boasted exhibits, recreations, native peoples, and demonstrations that allowed visitors to experience the "family jewels" of the French civilizing mission. For example, perhaps some of the most impressive parts of the park that families and travelers could visit were recreations of Angkor Vat in the Cambodian sector or Casablanca in the Moroccan corner.⁹⁶ Peoples from each French colony were invited to inhabit their country's sector of the park and to perform cultural rituals, daily chores, or social activities in front of European spectators. This aspect of performance was sold as a humanitarian project, meant to dispel any "frightening

⁹⁴ Evans and Phillips, *Algeria Anger of the Dispossessed*, 43-44.

⁹⁵ Celestin, Roger and Eliane DalMoline, *France From 1851 to the Present: Universalism in Crisis*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 185-187.

⁹⁶ Celestin and DalMoline, *France From 1851 to the Present*, 185-187.

reputations as wild and barbaric individuals,” that local Parisians might harbor against their colonial brethren.⁹⁷ In fact, the institutions of the civilizing mission were even represented to display the benefits of French intervention in other regions of the world. Churches, schools, and hospitals were built within the park as well to exhibit the modernizing effect of colonialism. However, the exposition’s true effects were to exoticize, commodify, and to make attractions of indigenous culture. In making a human zoo, a living ethnic museum, the colonial exposition crystallized the perception of colonial peoples as stuck in the past. From after it opened in May of 1931 until it was closed, the colonial theme park saw nearly 35 million visitors and made an unexpectedly large amount of money.⁹⁸

However, the Colonial Exposition of 1931 was not without its critics or controversy. It was condemned by many colonial immigrants living in Paris and also by political groups who saw colonialism as a stain on France’s reputation. In fact, a *contre exposition* was created by a group of surrealists, communists, and socialists just outside the grounds of the attraction.⁹⁹ The group sought to expose the darker side of French colonialism to encourage people to refuse to visit the exposition using a number of different tactics. In addition to the use of large banners denouncing the park, the groups also displayed graphic proof of the reality of colonial war. They held up images and illustrations of the violence perpetrated by the French army in their campaigns to conquer various countries, in addition to the destitution and poverty faced by many who actually lived in the colonies.¹⁰⁰ The *contre exposition* had some success in disgusting Parisians and visitors from around the world enough to discourage them from visiting the sanitized version of the civilizing mission. One Surrealist and poet, Louis Aragon, published a work titled *Persécuté persécuteur* (*Persecuted Persecutor*), to point out the internal contradictions of the Colonial Exposition.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Celestin and DalMoline, *France From 1851 to the Present*, 188.

¹⁰⁰ Celestin and DalMoline, *France From 1851 to the Present*, 188.

Sun, sun from beyond the seas you render angelic
 The excremental beard of the governors
 Sun of corals and ebony
 Sun of numbered slaves
 Sun of nakedness sun of opium of flagellation
 Sun of fireworks in honor of the taking of the Bastille
 Above Cayenne a fourteenth of July
 It rains it pours on the Colonial Exposition.¹⁰¹

His words perfectly encompass the blatant hypocrisy of the celebration of French colonialism by contrasting it with the celebration of the French Revolution. Aragon poignantly points out that while Parisians, ignorant in their bliss, happily visited the colonial exposition, that *les indigènes* suffered in the colonies. During the interwar period, the glaring contradiction of a universalist, Republican nation bent on colonial domination, became more and more difficult to swallow, both within the metropole and abroad.

The Birth of a National Consciousness

While the interwar period in mainland France was characterized by imperial pride, it was also defined by the growth of nationalist reform and resistance groups in Algeria. Quickly after the end of World War I and the failure of the French government to extend more rights to Algerians, pro-Islam, pro-autonomy organizations gained popularity. Starting in 1912 with the establishment of the moderate *Jeunes Algériens* (Young Algerians), these groups would become progressively more radical and demanding leading up to World War II, serving as the foundation for the revolution that would take place at its end. Specifically, the Young Algerians first mobilized organization in response to the conscription law of 1912

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

which demanded mandatory service in the French Army for Algerian men¹⁰². Led by the grandson of the late Abd el-Qadir, Emir Khaled, this group of young and highly educated men wrote the first of many Algerian manifestos that would proliferate throughout the interwar period. Hailing mostly from bourgeois or middle-class families, the Young Algerians in their early stages believed in the principles of French Universal Republicanism and did not question the metropole's sovereignty. They did however demand the end of the *Le Code de l'Indigénat*, equal taxation, suffrage to be extended to a larger portion of Algerian society, and lastly, representation in the National Assembly.¹⁰³ None of their demands were met by the French Government until 1919 when a law designed to make citizenship more available to Algerian men was passed. Unsurprisingly, this concession felt far short from addressing all of the goals of the Young Algerians, and by 1926 they expanded by creating the *Fédération des Élus Indigènes*, which brought together Algerian elected officials and professionals dedicated to reform.¹⁰⁴ One member however would go on to further radicalize the beliefs of the Young Algerians and transform it into the first to imagine a fully independent Algerian nation.

In 1926, Messali Hadj, a member of the Young Algerians who lived in France, created the *Étoile Nord-Africaine (The North African Star)*.¹⁰⁵ Hadj had served during World War I in the French army, been educated in a French school, and had emigrated to France to work after his service. During his time with the Young Algerians, Hadj believed that even with the continued control of the French in Algeria, that the idolized universal Republicanism of 1789 could be recreated in his home country. By 1926, following his experiences at war, working in the metropole, and after witnessing the effects of the Great Depression on immigrant and

¹⁰² Evans and Phillips, *Algeria Anger of the Dispossessed*, 43-44.

¹⁰³ Evans and Phillips, *Algeria Anger of the Dispossessed*, 43-44.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 39.

indigenous populations, he began doubting that dream.¹⁰⁶ Under Hadj's leadership the *North African Star* demanded freedom of press and association, a parliament chosen through universal suffrage, the confiscation of large estates from French colonists, the establishment of Arabic schools, and above all, it radically called for Algerian independence.¹⁰⁷ His organization became the first to conceptualize a unified Algerian nation, autonomous from France. As a result, Hadj would be arrested by the French Vichy government fifteen years later during World War II for suspected communist activity. But the damage was done. Hadj's popular ideologies started a chain reaction, spurring the nationalist Algerian movement to diversify and promoted the rise of new popular leaders. In 1931, a staunchly Muslim coalition of Islamic scholars started the Association of Algerian Ulema. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Mohammed Abduh, Rashid Rida, and Sheikh Abelhamid Ben Badis believed that Arabic and Islam should be reinstated as the center of Algerian culture and be the uniting force of the people.¹⁰⁸ These men were dedicated to recovering their Muslim history which had been erased and ignored by French colonizers. Ben Badis became one of the most revered Muslim figures of the Algerian nationalist movement and created institutes with the goal of training Islamic educators. After his death in the early 1940's, he became a mythical national hero whose teachings would be later used in the Algerian Revolution.¹⁰⁹ The legacies of men like Hadj and Ben Badis became powerful sources of inspiration for many Algerians during their revolution for independence. However, in response to strong anti-French sentimentality they had unearthed, right-wing, fascist groups began to form among French settlers in Algeria.

Right-Wing Reactionist Politics of the *Pieds-Noirs*

¹⁰⁶ Celestin and DalMolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 263.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Evans and Phillips, *Anger of the Dispossessed*, 43-45.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

The intensification of Algerian nationalist philosophies created widespread tension and anxiety among French *Pieds-Noirs* across the country. In addition, Algeria was hit very hard by the crash of the Great Depression and suffered economically during the 1930s. Even though the local Muslim population was hit hardest due to unequal wage and employment status, the settler population began blaming non-white groups for the monetary hardship felt nationwide.¹¹⁰ Specifically local Arab and Jewish populations were scapegoated and pitted against each other by advocates of imperialism who wanted to distract the masses from the economic culpability of colonialism.¹¹¹ Urbanization among native Algerians rose as the poor moved to increasingly crowded cities to find work, pushing them into close quarters with French colonists. Meanwhile in mainland France, a right-wing, extremely conservative Catholic group, mostly comprised of World War I veterans, le *Croix de feu* (or the Flaming Cross) was gaining popularity. The organization's influence came to Algeria in 1928 as World War I *Pied-Noir* veterans began to coordinate.¹¹² While the Algerian branch of the organization was small at first, leading local Remembrance Day celebrations, hosting film screenings, holding meetings, and organizing parades for veterans, it began to mushroom in size by 1932.¹¹³ *Le Croix de Feu* eventually became well known among the settler population as not just a veteran's coalition, but as an anti-left, anti-republic group that rejected the separation of Algeria and France. The association began to hold demonstrations and disseminate their newspaper, *Le Flambeau*, using both to lambast the French government which members felt wasn't doing enough to defend settlers against rising local unrest.¹¹⁴ In 1934 *le Croix de Feu* had become so large in many Algerian cities that different locations began creating subgroups called *cadres*, each of which had its own leaders. Not unlike the

¹¹⁰ Evans, *Algeria France's Undeclared War*, 62-63.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Kalman, Samuel, *French Colonial Fascism: The Extreme Right in Algeria, 1919-1939* (New York, Palgrave MacMillan Publishers, 2013), 56-57.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Kalman, *French Colonial Fascism*, 58-60.

Hitler youth, the group also created subgroups for women and children which were focused on community activities like sports and charity events.¹¹⁵ Then in 1935, a distinct leader of *le Croix de Feu* had been found in Colonel de la Rocque, a World War I veteran. During that year, he led a demonstration in Algiers of nearly 10,000 supporters, surprising nationalist groups who doubled their efforts to organize an anti-colonial organization that would encompass all factions.¹¹⁶ Not long after however, this upward surge of political organizations and ideologies was interrupted by the global plunge into World War II and the horrors of its aftermath.

World War II and the Descent into Decolonization

The course of World War II and the catastrophe it bore, markedly impacted France's empire and its image on the world stage. The downfall of France at the hands of Hitler's army and the rise of the Vichy government, left a legacy of humiliation and disappointment that would affect Northern Africa for decades after the end of the war. While the war itself postponed the fledgling independence movements beginning to materialize in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia in the 1930s, the post-war global climate proved to be ripe for the downfall of French colonialism. However, the war for autonomy in Algeria wouldn't officially begin until 1954 and was preceded by many catalyzing events with regards to both liberation and revolt. The emancipation of the Maghreb from Vichy power by American and British military forces greatly impacted prevailing ideologies of Algerian liberation and marshalled in widespread insurrection. The resulting revolts and massacres that occurred in Sétif and around the country in 1945 galvanized and informed an organized national movement to completely cut ties with French influence. However, Algeria was not the only

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Kalman, *French Colonial Fascism*, 58-60.

country that sought its independence from imperial domination. In other parts of the world, previously French and British-held colonies began to prove that the independence of “the third world” was possible, creating a world-wide indigenous movement. Further adding to this complex decade of flux, the United States and Russia rose as the new world super powers following World War II, leading to the competitions of the Cold War, spreading anxiety among capitalist powers who were losing footholds in colonial territories. Thus, the post-war era can be described as a crossroads which swept Algeria up and carried it towards revolution.

The Allied Powers and Operation Torch

Under the Vichy regime, Algeria became a strict anti-republican, authoritarian police state.¹¹⁷ Submitted to the rule of Marshall Petain, political prisoners and unwanted ethnic groups were persecuted, communist parties were outlawed, and the resources of daily life became more scarce.¹¹⁸ However, the Vichy regime was popular among *Pieds-Noirs* who felt that under its directives, they were safer from Algerian nationalist groups.¹¹⁹ With regards to the native population, the downfall of France had an entirely different effect. As witnesses to the humiliation of France and its capitulation to the Nazi's, nationalist groups felt emboldened. The French Empire no longer appeared impervious to foreign powers -- an impression which only became further solidified by the region's subsequent liberation from the Vichy government. In 1942, Allied Forces launched Operation Torch to free Northern Africa from the grips of the French puppet government. Working together, British, Canadian, and American forces landed in Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers, quickly sweeping aside Nazi-

¹¹⁷ Evans, *Algeria France's Undeclared War*, 76.

¹¹⁸ Evans, *Algeria France's Undeclared War*, 75-76.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

sympathetic French forces.¹²⁰ Specifically the presence and influence of the American soldiers would prove to have a significant and lasting impact. To the chagrin of both the colonialist nations of England and France, President Roosevelt ordered that leaflets be dropped in both Morocco and Algeria saying, “We come to your country to free you from the grip of conquerors who seek to deprive you of your sovereign rights, your religious freedom and the right to lead your way of life in peace.”¹²¹ In addition, the Americans brought with them the ideas of the new Atlantic Charter which outlined their country’s anticolonial policy and admonished the dangers of territorial expansion.¹²² However President Roosevelt was not alone in these sentiments. In the wake of World War II, colonialism and nation building became associated with Nazism and fascism, pressuring Allied countries still holding territories to grant widespread independence. It was suddenly impossible “to confidently view ‘true colonization’ in a positive light.”¹²³

The Frustration of the Maghreb

Near its end and after World War II, calls for decolonization skyrocketed. However due to pressure to compete with the new world super powers of the United States and the Soviet Union, made decolonization very unfavorable for the French government.¹²⁴ In addition the fear of a loss of imperial identity, insidious racism, and economic setback kept the National Assembly from fully considering the independence of Algeria. As a result France clung to its territories and was condemned by members of the United Nations. Many world leaders felt it had become obvious that, “the conditions that had made France’s extensive colonial empire possible had changed and the stage was set for its disintegration.”

¹²⁰ Watson, William E., *Tricolor and the Crescent: France and the Islamic World* (Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 84-86.

¹²¹ Evans, *Algeria France’s Undeclared War*, 77.

¹²² Celestin and DalMolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 252.

¹²³ Celestin and DalMolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 248.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

It was no longer feasible to deny the fact that, “the heart of this disintegration lay a challenge to the very basis of France as the supposed origin and repository of universal value.”¹²⁵

During their time in service, many Algerians who had fought for the French during World War II felt the same. Unfortunately however, many of these veterans would come home only to realize that despite a growing global disapproval of French colonialism, it would not be abandoned. Free France regarded the empire a part of the country’s patrimony just as the Vichy government had – a hypocrisy that would render Franco-Algerian assimilation impossible.¹²⁶ In protest, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco all began petitioning General Charles de Gaulle to discuss terms for increased autonomy and independence from the French government between 1943 and 1945.¹²⁷ In 1942, nationalist groups under the leadership of a new rising leader, Ferhat Abbas, wrote *The Manifesto of the Algerian People* calling for self-government in Algeria.¹²⁸ But these requests were mostly ignored as the French government instead attempted to appease indigenous populations. On March 7, 1944 the Provisional French government implemented a new ordinance stating that public law governed *all* French territory and granted full political rights to about 65,000 Algerian men.¹²⁹ Many however, refused to recognize this gesture, as it failed to reach the demands of Abbas and his followers. To put further pressure on the French state, they formed *Les Amis du Manifeste de la Liberté* which sought to unite all insurgent groups in favor of independence under the helm of one organization.¹³⁰ In this environment of discontent and frustration, tensions between colonists and nationalists grew to a violent degree.

Sétif and its Aftermath

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*.

¹²⁶ Watson, *Tricolor and the Crescent*, 87.

¹²⁷ Watson, *Tricolor and the Crescent*, 96.

¹²⁸ Celestin and DalMolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 252.

¹²⁹ Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 39.

¹³⁰ Evans, *Algeria France’s Undeclared War*, 78.

May 8 is a date recognized as a time for celebration in France. However in Algeria on May 8, 1945 is remembered as the moment when Franco-Algerian relations fell into total disrepair. In the countryside town of Sétif, anti-colonialist demonstrators clashed with local colonists in a bloody confrontation that provoked and stirred the early stages of the Algerian Revolution. Tensions in Sétif between locals and the *Pied-Noir* population had become severe by the spring of 1945. Due to a lack of rain, and the dominance of land-owning colonists, indigenous groups were suffering from lack of food and work.¹³¹ However, the foreign-owned *Compagnie Genevoise* in the area was prospering on its 15,000 hectares of land.¹³² To show their discontent, native Algerians who believed in the nationalist programs of groups like *Les Amis du Manifeste de la Liberté* decided to organize a demonstration on May 8 in the center of town. The date was significant as it was the celebration of Victory in Europe and the end of World War II. Anticipating possible protests, French police forces in Sétif banned all banners and flags representing independence. But nonetheless, nationalists arrived in the morning of May 8, 8,000 strong to lay a wreath at the war memorial at the center of town brandishing the Algerian star and crescent. Not only did they disregard the instructions of the police concerning their freedom of expression, but the demonstrators also arrived with knives, axes, and sabers.¹³³ At first the protest was peaceful, but when police officers attempted to forcibly take flags, agitation erupted. Twenty-year-old Bouziz Salah was the first to be shot by French forces, launching both sides into violence.

The accumulated casualty reports made a grisly reading: 103 Europeans murdered, plus another hundred wounded; a number of women brutally raped, including one

¹³¹ Horne, Alistair, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (New York, New York Review of Books, 2006), 24.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Evans, *Algeria France's Undeclared War*, 86.

aged eighty-four. Many of the corpses are appallingly mutilated: women with their breasts slashed off, men with their sexual organs stuffed into their mouths.¹³⁴

The successive backlash from the local *Pied-Noir* population and the French army was swift and extreme. The number of Muslim dead has been debated since the massacre of Sétif and fluctuates between reports. The Tuber Report officially produced by the French government places the number between 1,020 and 1,300 Algerians were murdered in response to violence against Europeans. However, the Egyptian press reported as many as 45,000 dead – a number that was later accepted by the Algerian government following independence.¹³⁵

The shocking uprising and violence in Sétif spread like wildfire throughout the Algerian countryside. De Gaulle's reaction from the metropole was swift and severe, sending 10,000 troops into Algeria to put down the revolts.¹³⁶ French soldiers set out to make examples to discourage the rest of the native population from resisting the imperial dominance of the state. They burned homes, bombed villages, and organized summary executions. Entire villages were forced to humiliate themselves by prostrating in front of the French flag, while some soldiers even made trophies from the men they killed. The backlash lasted until May 24, and yet the French did not declare war on Algeria.¹³⁷ To do so would be to recognize Algeria as its own nation, as separate from the metropole. Colonists also took part in the retaliation, lynching and mutilating natives.¹³⁸ Thousands were buried in mass graves, and subsequently the French government attempted to bury the crimes along with victims. However, the international press condemned the atrocity and the excessive response of the French military. All claims that deaths exceeded 1,500 were consistently denied by the French government.¹³⁹ Many nationalists who had been waiting for the right moment for the

¹³⁴ Alistair, *A Savage War of Peace*, 26-27.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Evans, *Algeria France's Undeclared War*, 87.

¹³⁷ Evans, *Algeria France's Undeclared War*, 88.

¹³⁸ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 26.

¹³⁹ Evans, *Algeria France's Undeclared War*, 89-91.

beginning of a revolution called for widespread mobilization after Sétif. However due to the overwhelming efficiency and brutality of the French response, a general uprising became impossible. Nationalist leaders were arrested, and the diversity of independence groups made organizing a nationwide effort difficult.¹⁴⁰ Regardless, the long-term effects of the massacre at Sétif and the damage it did to the project of French colonialism, were devastating -- perhaps the most destructive of them being the creation of newly radicalized figures, especially among indigenous writers hailing from French colonies around the world.

Anti-Colonial Literature

One of those writers was Kateb Yacine, an Algerian who participated in the protests at Sétif at the age of sixteen.¹⁴¹ Later in adulthood, Yacine would recall, “The shock which I felt at the pitiless butchery that caused the deaths of thousands of Muslims, I have never forgotten. From that moment my nationalism took definite form.”¹⁴² The event shaped his writing, mostly in his poetic and theatrical works written from the Algerian perspective. The literature he produced often outlined the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, criticizing the French presence in Algeria and demonstrating the effect it had on Algerian identity. In 1956 Yacine published *Nedjma*, meaning *star* in Arabic, which became his most famous work. The collection, which includes poetry, historical narrative, personal diaries, and dramatized sequences, completely changed global perception of Maghrebi literature.¹⁴³ Yacine’s style has been described as “a terroristic technique that breaks the proper structure of the novel,” and also as artistically incoherent.¹⁴⁴ Experts on his work theorize this choice of style was used to contrast politics and poetry as antagonistic to each

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 27.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Corcoran, Patrick. *The Cambridge Introduction to Francophone Literature* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), 49.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

other, and to also mimic the disillusionment and dislocation of the Algerian identity under French occupation. Yacine particularly alludes to the confusion of Algerian heritage and native history in *Nedjma*.

The fathers killed in the rides of Abd el-Kader (the only shadow that could cover the expanse of land, man of pen and sword, only leader capable of unifying the tribes to rise to the state of nation, if only the French had not come to break his effort . . . but the conquest was a necessary evil . . . and just as the Turks, the Romans and the Arabs, the French could but only take root.¹⁴⁵

Here Yacine not only hints at a lost generation of “fathers” killed in the war of conquest against French forces, but also to Abd el-Kader, the mythical hero of the Algerian resistance. He insinuates that had yet another colonizer not interrupted the unification achieved by Kader, perhaps Algeria would have become a consolidated nation. A staunch nationalist, Yacine makes frequent references in his writing to an idyllic independent and undivided Algeria. Scholars also believe it was not only Yacine’s experience at Sétif that influenced *Nedjma*, but also his arrest by the French police and his mother’s descent into madness.¹⁴⁶ After witnessing the horrors of the massacre at Sétif, Yacine’s mother was institutionalized due to her permanent traumatization. His work, along with many others in the 1940s and 50s, created an entirely new genre of Algerian nationalist literature that was systematically censored by the French government. However, writers far from Algeria in other regions of the French empire would also come to influence and support its independence through their literature.

One of the most influential writers on French colonialism during the mid-1900s was Aimé Césaire, a Martiniquais intellectual. He is often credited with founding the Negritude

¹⁴⁵ Yacine, Kateb. *Nedjma* (Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1956), 102 (translation, Haley Brown).

¹⁴⁶ Corcoran, *The Cambridge Introduction to Francophone Literature*, 51.

movement in Francophone literature and is well known for his criticism of French colonialism both in his poems and treatises.¹⁴⁷ In 1955, right after the beginning of the Algerian War, he published his *Discourse on Colonialism* which explored the racial and cultural hierarchies imposed upon the French Caribbean. In the piece, Césaire also frequently criticizes the civilizing mission and attempts to debunk it as a humanitarian project.

They talk to me about progress, about ‘projects completed’, about illnesses cured, about standards of living raised above their own. I talk about societies emptied of their being . . . of lands confiscated, of religions massacred, of artistic splendors demolished, of extraordinary possibilities wiped out.¹⁴⁸

Here, not unlike Yacine, Césaire laments the loss, destruction, and cultural stunting of indigenous peoples which he believed accompanied French colonialism. In favor of the autonomy of all French invaded territories, Césaire rejected any project for assimilation.¹⁴⁹ Thus, in collaboration with writers from Senegal and other French departments, Césaire advocated for a pan-African movement by creating intellectual journals like the *African Presence* in 1947.¹⁵⁰ With regards to the Algerian independence movement, Césaire was most influential for his theories on fascism. Césaire regularly compared colonialism to Nazism, both in his writing and in interviews – a poignant contrast that bolstered international support for the French decolonization of the Maghreb and Indochina. In one statement, he explained that what made Hitler so abhorrent to western white society was that the dictator had for the first time, “applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of

¹⁴⁷ Corcoran, *The Cambridge Introduction to Francophone Literature*, 199-200.

¹⁴⁸ Corcoran, *The Cambridge Introduction to Francophone Literature*, 202.

¹⁴⁹ Gallagher, Mary. *Aimé Césaire and Francophone Postcolonial Thought* in Forsdick, Charles and David Murphy. *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2009), 32.

¹⁵⁰ Gallagher, *Aimé Césaire and Francophone Postcolonial Thought*, Forsdick and Murphy, *Post-Colonial Thought in the French-Speaking World*, 33.

Africa.”¹⁵¹ By pointing out the paradoxical nature of a country which had fought against the genocide and fascism systemically imposed by Hitler, but also supported colonialism, Césaire held France accountable for its internal contradictions. In fact, his anti-colonial theories were influential enough to provoke the radicalization of a future ally to the FLN, or the revolutionary party of Algeria: Frantz Fanon.

Frantz Fanon also grew up in the French dominated island of Martinique. From a young age, he was encouraged by his family to not speak his native language, but to adopt French instead. In his teens, Fanon attended a high school where he was taught by Aimé Césaire who introduced him to notions of an independent “Third World”.¹⁵² After high school, Fanon studied medicine, focusing on psychology and attended university in France. During the Second World War, he fought on the side of Free French Forces to combat the fascism of the Nazi Vichy government.¹⁵³ However, after the war Fanon became more and more disillusioned with France as he witnessed the psychological effects of the racial and cultural hierarchies of colonialism in his own patients. Fanon theorized that colonialism created a master-slave dialectic that forced the “native” to internalize the concept of his own inferiority to colonial authorities.¹⁵⁴ In addition, Fanon believed that French colonialism was doomed to collapse around the world as indigenous populations conceptualized their own nationhood and autonomy, free from fascist oppression. In the Algerian War he found a model for his theories on how this would come to pass:

The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence. This praxis enlightens the militant because it shows him the means and the end . . . The violence of the colonial regime and the counterviolence of the colonized balance each other and

¹⁵¹ Celestin and Dalmolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 253.

¹⁵² Silverman, Max. *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Violence* in Forsdick, Charles and David Murphy. *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2009), 77.

¹⁵³ Corcoran, *The Cambridge Introduction to Francophone Literature*, 205.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity . . . Violence among the colonized will spread in proportion to the violence exerted by the colonial regime.¹⁵⁵

Unable to reconcile living in France and working for the state medical system while in the meantime colonized peoples fought oppression, Fanon left his profession and France to dedicate himself to the Algerian struggle. In the late 1950s he joined the ranks of the FLN, or the National Liberation Front of Algeria. He wrote for their newspaper, *El Moujahid*, preaching that pan-Africanism was the key to the liberation of colonized peoples.¹⁵⁶ In 1961, Fanon published one of his most famous works, *The Wretched of the Earth*, which became a revolutionary manifesto, describing the tactics necessary for the success of the FLN and the Algerian people. His theories were, and still are, very controversial in their outright support of extreme violence. Fanon believed that because the French colonies were created through violence, that colonized peoples could only dismantle the oppressive structures that kept them from self-constitution through violence.¹⁵⁷ *The Wretched of the Earth* condemns political movements that seek compromise or avoid confrontation with the colonial master – Fanon theorized that Algerians needed to wage total war against the French to *take* their independence.¹⁵⁸ To *ask* for permission to be separate from the French state would legitimize the domination of the colonizer and the subjugation of the Algerian people. The belief of the impossibility of decolonization through concession and the necessity of violence outlined in Fanon's theories, would come to define the Algerian War.

Each of these writers greatly impacted intellectual thought in France proper. Each wrote using the French, the language of the colonizer, in order to reach a European audience

¹⁵⁵ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 44, 46-47.

¹⁵⁶ Silverman, Max. *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Violence*, Forsdick and Murphy, *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World*, 78.

¹⁵⁷ Silverman, Max. *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Violence*, Forsdick and Murphy, *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World*, 85.

¹⁵⁸ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 24.

and change prevailing thought on the positive aspects of colonialism. Many French historians and philosophers began to reconsider whether the Republic could truly adhere to its traditional values while also supporting imperialist programs. In fact, philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre wrote a preface to accompany Fanon's publication of *The Wretched of the Earth* to analyze such a contradiction. Sartre explains that upon picking up Fanon's book, Europeans put themselves on trial:

Have the courage to read it, primarily because it will make you feel ashamed, and shame, as Marx said, is a revolutionary feeling. All is lost unless . . . I, a European, am stealing my enemy's book and turning it into a way of healing Europe. Make the most of it.¹⁵⁹

The literature produced by figures like Yacine, Césaire, Fanon encouraged portions of French society to take an introspective look into the aspirations of their country, both at home and abroad. Thus the anti-colonial movement which had begun in the colonies arrived in the heart of the metropole and created allies for the Algerian independence movement. By the end of the 1940's this sentiment became widespread in France as it began its first phase of forced decolonization following war in Indochina.

The Fall of Indochina and the Rise of the FLN

Just as Fanon had predicted, France's colonial world *did* begin to change violently and crumble in the late 1950s. 1954 specifically not only marked a large military loss for the country, but also the birth of new rival revolutionary groups. In French Indochina, a war between the Vietnamese and French colonial forces had been raging since the end of World War II. But in 1954, rebel Viet Minh soldiers shocked the world and defeated the French

¹⁵⁹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, xlix.

army, proving that colonial independence was possible.¹⁶⁰ The victory of Ho Chi Minh catalyzed a world-wide system of solidarity between oppressed peoples living under “Western imperial powers.” In addition, the defeat was yet another humiliation for France which had hoped to achieve redemption by restoring order to Indochina after its losses in World War II. This failure was compounded by the establishment of a new organization, spurred on by the example of Indochina which would become the face of Algerian anti-colonialism. The FLN, or the National Liberation Front, united in October 1954 to organize a unified Algerian struggle for independence. Led by nine men, including Mostefa Ben Boulaïd, Larbi Ben M’hidi, Rabah Bitat, Mohamed Boudiaf, Mourad Didouche, Krim Blekacem, Hocine Aïd Ahmed, Mohamed Khider, and the widely popular Ahmed Ben Bella, a new manifesto, flag, and national identity was created.¹⁶¹ To the French, the rise of the FLN was the greatest threat that had yet been posed against French Algeria, and it had come in the midst of widespread colonial crisis.

On All Saint’s Day, November 1, 1954 the FLN made a proclamation outlining its demands for Algerian independence. The manifesto defined the coalition’s goal as the “restoration of the Algerian state, sovereign, democratic, and social within the framework of the principles of Islam,” in addition the “preservation of all fundamental freedoms, without distinction of race or religion.”¹⁶² Although the FLN wanted to reinstate Islam as a large cultural focal point in Algeria and used the Islamic symbol of the crescent on its flag, the FLN publically stated that its aim was *not* to wage a holy war. In addition, the FLN defined itself as a socialist organization, although it would be widely framed as communist by the French government.¹⁶³ In response to the proclamation, the French political body remained quiet, refusing to acknowledge the existence of a separate Algerian state. Paradoxically

¹⁶⁰ Celestin and Dalmolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 260.

¹⁶¹ Celestin and Dalmolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 264.

¹⁶² Evans, *Algeria France’s Undeclared War*, 116.

¹⁶³ Watson, *Tricolor and Crescent*, 116.

however, the French government *did* enter into negotiations with other Maghrebin countries, Tunisia and Morocco, to discuss their independence from French rule. When asked why Algeria was not to be given the same consideration, the French government claimed that due to the fact that Tunisia and Morocco were “protectorates,” they warranted more autonomy. Algeria, however, was different. As President Pierre Mendes-France put it,

One does not compromise when it comes to defending the internal peace of the nation, the unity and integrity of the Republic. The Algerian departments are part of the French Republic. They have been French for a long time, and they are irrevocably French . . . Between them and metropolitan France there can be no conceivable secession.¹⁶⁴

This concept that something made Algeria more French than other French colonies would serve as the metropole’s reasoning for refusing independence for the next decade. However, the FLN had anticipated this response and military backlash as a result of their demands – nationalist organizations had attempted to negotiate with France on diplomatic and legislative terms for years without success. As a result, quickly after November 1, the FLN began preparing for a widespread military offensive. Ben Bella was put in charge of amassing arms both left over from World War II and also provided by Tunisian, Moroccan, and Egyptian sympathizers.¹⁶⁵ The stage was set for the FLN’s first move to attack the structures of French colonialism in Algeria.

The War Begins

During November and December of 1954, the FLN began launching a series of attacks in the major metropolitan centers of Algeria. Their initial targets were mostly

¹⁶⁴ Celestin and Dalmolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 260.

¹⁶⁵ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 129.

governmental buildings and police stations, French colonists, and Algerian civilians in favor of colonial domination.¹⁶⁶ However by 1955, violence between Algerian forces, the French army, and colonist populations skyrocketed. The FLN's first large-scale attack occurred in Philippeville, where FLN *fellagha*, or soldiers of the revolution, killed 37 *Pieds-Noirs*.¹⁶⁷ In reprisal, colonist and vigilante groups organized what they termed *ratonnades*, or "rat hunts", killing 1,000 to 5,000 Muslims.¹⁶⁸ The event set off a wave of uprisings in the Algerian countryside, creating a climate of fear that pushed colonists into cities to escape attack. Throughout 1955, the FLN would come to kill 1,000 colonists along with 6,000 Muslims which they saw as sympathizers.¹⁶⁹ The French response was extreme – the government sent 20,000 troops in to bring insurgents to heel.¹⁷⁰ The government also appointed Jacques Soustelle Governor General of Algeria, who gave all French soldiers and military commands license to make any decisions in the field that were deemed necessary to battle the FLN. In this way Soustelle was able to avoid all culpability for the questionable decisions of the men who served under him because he never had to give direct orders calling for brutality.¹⁷¹ Violence rose in large part due to the fact that the FLN utilized guerrilla warfare tactics and chose unassuming individuals dressed as normal civilians to carry out suicide bombings, it became more and more difficult for the French army to distinguish FLN soldiers from the normal population.¹⁷² Thus it became common for the French army to murder innocent men, women, and children in their search for Algerian nationalists. Brutality on both sides shocked the world. On the part of the FLN, new members were expected to kill a "traitor," whether a French soldier or colonist sympathizer, to leave the apprenticeship stage.¹⁷³ An environment

¹⁶⁶ Celestin and Dalmolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 264.

¹⁶⁷ Watson, *Tricolor and Crescent*, 119.

¹⁶⁸ Watson, *Tricolor and Crescent*, 118.

¹⁶⁹ Watson, *Tricolor and Crescent*, 119.

¹⁷⁰ Celestin and Dalmolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 264.

¹⁷¹ Connelly, Matthew, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), 80.

¹⁷² Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 87.

¹⁷³ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 134.

of extreme violence was fostered in the early stages of the war – the French army assumed the guilt of all Arabs until proven innocent, and the FLN accepted terrorism as a necessary evil.

The war could only escalate into 1956 and 57; there was no turning back. The French army began guillotining Algerian prisoners and soldiers, while the FLN bombed cafes and restaurants frequented by *Pieds-Noirs*.¹⁷⁴ On the international stage, the French struggled to gain the support of its allies who felt they could not back an imperial war. Specifically, Franco-American relations became very tense as the French government asked for public support, money, and military aid from Washington. When the United States refused, a frustrated Ambassador Maurice Couve de Murville told the French State Department, “the less said by the Americans on North Africa, the better.”¹⁷⁵ Every country that expressed its support for the FLN’s project *or* refused to show support for the colonial stubbornness of the French, increased the popularity of the Algerian independence movement. As a result, by 1956 the number of FLN regulars had increased from just a few thousand to between 15,000 and 20,000.¹⁷⁶ That year, Abbane Ramdane took over leadership of the FLN, imposing strict hierarchies on the organization and calling for increased violence until France recognized Algerian independence and the *Pied-Noir* population of Algeria evacuated.¹⁷⁷ The FLN called upon “the local population to take up axes, knives, and clubs,” to attack European civilians, Muslim collaborators, and French military personnel. One French soldier would later recall,

¹⁷⁴ Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 131.

¹⁷⁵ Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 83.

¹⁷⁶ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 141.

¹⁷⁷ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 145.

There were so many bodies they had to be buried with bulldozers. The mayor personally directed lynchings. In one case, city officials corralled all the young Muslim men they could find into the local stadium and killed them man to man.¹⁷⁸

In response to the escalating crisis, the *Pied-Noir* population began to feel more and more disenchanted with the metropole. Regardless of the strong display of power shown by the French army whom they considered their heroes, the *Pied-Noir* population did not feel that the French government was doing enough to protect them from FLN attacks. In 1956 in Algiers, 20,000 colonists and *anciens combattants*, or World War veterans, organized a procession to protest the inaction of the French government.¹⁷⁹ Among colonists, army officials, and French politicians, it appeared that more had to be done to stop the spread of the National Liberation Front. The French army organized to try to destroy the FLN in Algiers, the largest city in the country.

The Battle of Algiers

By 1957, the FLN had expanded its tactics for fighting the French presence in Algeria. The organization called for a nationwide strike to put a halt to the colonial economy that was benefitting the metropole. Nearly 82% of the native working population (mostly employed in the service industry) complied in Algiers, increasing tensions with the resident *Pied-Noir* population.¹⁸⁰ To respond to the collective action and to reassure *pied-noir* citizens, General Jacques Massu was sent into Algiers with a 4,600-strong paratrooper legion.¹⁸¹ Massu was an experienced veteran, well known for his brutality. One general, Paul Aussaresses, who worked under Massu in Algiers, described him saying,

¹⁷⁸ Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 86.

¹⁷⁹ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 149.

¹⁸⁰ Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 130.

¹⁸¹ Watson, *Tricolor and Crescent*, 121.

He was a great soldier and knowing it he took many liberties . . . In Indochina he recaptured Hanoi in 1946 with such energy that Emperor Bao Dai requested his transfer back to France. Massu had mopped up the city using mortar fire and taking no prisoners.¹⁸²

Massu's experience in the French colonial war in Vietnam and the humiliation of its loss, would inform the uncompromising tactics he used in Algiers. Upon arrival, Massu quickly imposed martial law and strict curfews. Soldiers were told to shoot anyone they saw out after dark.¹⁸³ Massu also gave orders to break the general strike called by the FLN and to organize a thorough sweep of the Casbah (the Muslim neighborhood of Algiers) in the attempt to flush out terrorists. Copying tactics used by Napoleon's army in foreign territories, French military personnel began identifying all the inhabitants of the city and numbering their homes for surveillance.¹⁸⁴ Any Algerian who participated in the strike or who was suspected as an FLN sympathizer was questioned and arrested by the French army.¹⁸⁵ To break the local strike, the French army used armored cars to tear down closed store fronts, forcing owners to sell their goods or fall victim to looting.¹⁸⁶ In response, the FLN continued a constant barrage of bombings and guerilla warfare.

The Battle of Algiers lasted for almost an entire year. The casualties and consequences of the battle would come to shift the entire course of the Algerian independence movement. Until its end, the FLN increased bombings of restaurants, cafes, concerts, homes, and other locations frequented by *Pied-Noir* civilians. In one case a cafeteria was bombed, killing five and leaving sixty wounded. As a result, French forces meticulously combed the Casbah, searching everyone for bombs – especially women wearing

¹⁸² Aussaresses, Paul, *The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Algeria 1955-1957* (New York, Enigma Books, 2002), 73-78.

¹⁸³ Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 87.

¹⁸⁴ Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 92.

¹⁸⁵ Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 116.

¹⁸⁶ Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 130.

Muslim robes and veils. The FLN frequently used young girls as suicide bombers because they did not incur as much suspicion.¹⁸⁷ Hundreds of Muslims were shot and lynched in the wake of each bombing and summary executions were carried out by the French army daily. As General Paul Aussaresses explained in his account of the battle, there was an understood system in which French military personnel covered for one another's illegal actions. He even admits that many summary executions in the Battle of Algiers were framed as failed escape attempts even if they weren't.¹⁸⁸ Shootings of Algerian citizens were justified by the leaders of French forces through the assertion that if put in custody, the terrorists would escape, and that if they were set free, they would continue to perpetuate violence.¹⁸⁹ Extensive records of all those who were arrested and questioned by the French army were organized to avoid war crime accusations. Prisoners who were murdered in captivity were documented as "LL", or "liberated" to make it less obvious that they had been purposefully disposed of.¹⁹⁰ The extensive violence led to widespread international outcry against the conduct of the French army. However, perhaps the biggest impact of the Battle of Algiers on international opinion was its exposure of the systemic use of torture by French forces.

Institutionalized Torture and the Reinstatement of de Gaulle

With thousands being arrested in Algiers and other hotbeds of colonial violence, rumors that the French army had begun using methods banned by the United Nations proliferated. Under Article 303 of the French Penal Code, practicing torture had been made illegal during the revolution of the late 1700's. In fact, it imposed the death penalty upon anyone who utilized it.¹⁹¹ With regards to the war in Algeria, the French government

¹⁸⁷ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 192-193.

¹⁸⁸ Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 122.

¹⁸⁹ Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 127.

¹⁹⁰ Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 101-102.

¹⁹¹ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 196.

denounced and denied all forms of torture, but the high numbers of citizens disappearing into the night in Algiers spoke to the contrary.¹⁹² By 1958 French forces had declared victory in the city of Algiers, but the means by which they had achieved the feat became public, and discredited the reassurances of the French government. That year, Henri Alleg, an anti-war writer for a French communist newspaper, published his book *La Question*. It was an account of his experience of being tortured by French paratroopers for a month in Algiers and became a sensation in mainland France.¹⁹³ His testimony made it clear that under the leadership of men like General Massu, torture was used often and kept secret from the press. Alleg describes being humiliated, taunted, stripped naked, and brutalized by French soldiers.¹⁹⁴ He also reported on other frequently used techniques that he suffered in addition to the many Algerian men and women who came through the detainment center he was held in. Alleg was electrocuted (including on his genitals), endured water torture, was drugged, and refused food and water.¹⁹⁵ In his own words,

A flash of lightening exploded next to my ear and I felt my heart racing in my breast. I struggled, screaming, and stiffened myself until the straps cut into my flesh . . . Each blow stupefied me a little more, but at the same time confirmed me in my decision not to give way to these brutes who flattered themselves like they were the gestapo.¹⁹⁶

The French soldiers tried tirelessly to intimidate Alleg for his anti-war sentiments and to pull any possibly valuable information out of him. They even threatened his family back home in France.¹⁹⁷ Alleg said that he felt it was his duty to publish the work so that the French people knew what was being “done in THEIR name” in Algeria.¹⁹⁸ The book became an

¹⁹² Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 197.

¹⁹³ Henri Alleg, *The Question* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1958), 34.

¹⁹⁴ Alleg, *The Question*, 46.

¹⁹⁵ Alleg, *The Question*, 44-47.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Alleg, *The Question*, 58.

¹⁹⁸ Alleg, *The Question*, 96.

international scandal, selling 65,000 copies in its first five weeks, and sparked anti-war protests in hexagonal France.¹⁹⁹

As a result, French politicians and military officials endeavored to organize damage control. They attempted to ban and censor *La Question* by taking “special legislative powers,” but the effort failed and backfired.²⁰⁰ Alleg had opened a flood gate of information that further villainized the French military project in Algeria. Accounts of Algerian men who had their stomachs pumped so full of water they almost drowned, Muslim women raped and violated with objects like bottles, and secret mass graves made their way into the international press.²⁰¹ It was becoming clear that there was a sadistic and perverted system of “forcing information” out of suspected Algerian rebels that had not only been condoned by the French army but *sanctioned* by high command. In the wake of World War II, many agreed with Alleg in comparing General Massu’s men to the German gestapo that had terrorized millions in Europe. When questioned about the methods used by paratroopers, a certain Colonel Mathieu replied,

OK, fine, let’s try to be precise then. The word “torture” doesn’t appear in our orders . . . The FLN, for its part, asks each of its members to keep silent for twenty-four hours after capture . . . The organization therefore has the time necessary to render information useless. And us, what kind of questioning should we adopt? Court procedures that can drag on for months?²⁰²

Mathieu’s response is characteristic of the many justifications for torture that were given by French representatives – torture was defined as a necessary evil in Algeria to beat the FLN. The ends justified the means. Due to the fact that bombings had become essentially an everyday occurrence, military officials explained that they were all but powerless without the

¹⁹⁹ Celestin and Dalmolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 267.

²⁰⁰ Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 132.

²⁰¹ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 200-202.

²⁰² Celestin and Dalmolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 266.

usage of “strong-arm” techniques.²⁰³ Their claims were backed by the supportive *Pied-Noir* population of Algiers who saw hardliner French paratroopers as their heroes and only chance against FLN terrorism. But the damage of Alleg’s book had been done, and anti-fascist organizations coordinated for protest in the metropole.

In the midst of scandal and new international support for Algerian revolutionary forces, General Massu called upon the French government to reinstate the man who had successfully brought France through World War II – General Charles de Gaulle.²⁰⁴ Massu believed that if anyone could hold the state together and achieve military victory at the same time, it was de Gaulle. Thus, on June 1, 1958, with the support of the National Assembly, General de Gaulle became Prime Minister and was granted “extraordinary powers” for the following six months. Three days later, he gave a famous speech in Algiers to a large European crowd in which he said, “*Je vous ai compris,*” or “I have understood you.”²⁰⁵ It appeared to *Pieds-Noirs* that de Gaulle would be their savior, and to many in France that he would not soon give up the colonial project in Algeria. Meanwhile, many of France’s top intellectuals had been vocal about the Algerian war since its beginning and had even aided writers like Franz Fanon in their efforts to publish. But with the new developments of 1958, they mobilized to condemn what appeared to them to be a rising fascist French state. In what became known as *Le manifeste de 121*, or *The Manifesto of the 121*, many philosophers, journalists, historians, artists, and psychologists voiced their disgust for the Algerian war and the conduct of the French government. Signed and organized by highly influential figures like Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, the manifesto states,

Is it necessary to remind our readers that, fifteen years after the destruction of the Hitlerian order, French militarism, responding to the pressures of this war, has

²⁰³ Maran, Rita, *Torture: The Role of Ideology in the French-Algerian War* (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1989), 82.

²⁰⁴ Celestin and Dalmolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 269.

²⁰⁵ Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 173.

succeeded in restoring torture and in once again turn it into something like a European institution? It is in these conditions that many Frenchmen have come to question the meaning of traditional values and obligations . . . The cause of the Algerian people, which is making a decisive contribution to the downfall of the colonial system, is the cause of all free men.²⁰⁶

The manifesto bolstered support for programs like the “suit-case carriers” who transported money through metropolitan France and eventually to the FLN for the purchase of arms. Thus, even public opinion in France itself began to turn against the continuation of the French-Algerian war and added to the widely held sentiment that the country was on the verge of internal rupture. In response, de Gaulle had to begin to admit that liquidating his country’s colonial power may be, in fact, *more* to his advantage, regardless of the expectations of the *Pieds-Noirs* and supporters of *l’Algérie française*. By the time he assumed the presidency in late 1958, de Gaulle began envisioning the decolonization of Algeria.

The Tumultuous 60s and the Rocky Road to Decolonization

At the end of 1959, and in early 1960, President de Gaulle strategically shifted away from the concept of “French Algeria” and moved towards a program of “association.” He defined this plan as his goal to create “an Algeria that will be pacified and transformed, developing its personality itself and closely associated with France.”²⁰⁷ It was the first time a head political official in the French government had hinted at the establishment of an “Algerian Algeria.” De Gaulle recognized that colonialism was dying all over the world, forcing France “in the spirit of the century” to let go of her North African territories.²⁰⁸ In

²⁰⁶ Celestin and Dalmolin, *France from 1851 to the Present*, 271

²⁰⁷ Phillip C. Naylor, *France and Algeria*, 24.

²⁰⁸ Evans, Martin, *Algeria France’s Undeclared War*, 262.

addition, President de Gaulle expressed that he had never believed that “assimilation” into French culture was ever possible for Algerians and explained his fear for what would happen if it was ever achieved:

Arabs are Arabs, Frenchmen are Frenchmen. Do you believe that the French body could absorb ten million Muslims, who tomorrow will be twenty million and the day after that forty?. . . My village would no longer be called Colombey-les-Deux Eglises but Colombey-les-Deux Mosquées!²⁰⁹

Here President de Gaulle conveys a growing anxiety of the time. The Algerian immigrant population of France had bloomed since World War II due to a demand for hard labor to rebuild destroyed cities. In fact, since the beginning of the Algerian war in 1954, the population saw a 25% increase and hit 400,000. Meanwhile, as violence continued between the French army forces unwilling to give up in Algeria and FLN soldiers who vowed to fight until their independence was recognized, de Gaulle decided to oversee a referendum in January of 1961 in an attempt to hasten decolonization.²¹⁰ Voters were asked to consider whether they agreed with President de Gaulle’s plan to allow for Algerian self-determination and with his sentiment that the colony “costs us much more than it is worth to us.”²¹¹ The results showed the proof of public opinion against the war – 76.25% voted in favor of the autonomy of Algeria.²¹² The leaders of the Algerian revolutionary movement began to prepare for the international recognition of their new nation.

In 1958, the FLN had proclaimed the formation of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic, or the GPRA.²¹³ By 1961, with no end of war in sight, President de Gaulle and the French government agreed to enter into peace negotiations with the GRPA. In

²⁰⁹ Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 179.

²¹⁰ Evans, *Algeria France’s Undeclared War*, 290.

²¹¹ Naylor, *France and Algeria*, 25.

²¹² Evans, *Algeria France’s Undeclared War*, 290.

²¹³ Naylor, *France and Algeria*, 27-29

May at Evian, Switzerland, the discussion about terms for a ceasefire and the creation of an “Algerian Algeria” began its complicated course.²¹⁴ In the first round of talks the GRPA made it clear they desired full public recognition and that French colonists would not be granted dual citizenship after independence. Instead *Pieds-Noirs* would either have to leave Algeria or apply to become nationals. The French government offered its support if violence against the colonist population ended and if France was allowed continued sovereignty in the Sahara.²¹⁵ Oil reserves had been found there and the French delegation wanted to maintain influence over the region, even after independence. The Algerian representatives refused, and the first “Evian Accords” ended with many issues unresolved. Even though the Algerian press condemned the Gaullist government for attempting to only partially decolonize their country, it did applaud the fact the discussion had even been opened. It illustrated that the French state had begun to recognize the legitimacy of an Algerian government. However, back in Paris, interactions between anti-colonial Algerian protestors and the French state were less diplomatic. In the fall of 1961, the Algerian quartier of Paris was put under surveillance and subject to a curfew that restricted movement between 8:30pm to 5:30am (not unlike restrictions that had been Algiers).²¹⁶ The immigrant population that President de Gaulle feared would continue to grow, was becoming restless under prejudiced rules applied to them, but not other Parisians. So, on the night of October 17, thousands of Algerian laborers organized for a demonstration in solidarity with nationalists fighting against the French army. The protest was peaceful, until Parisian police forces arrived and responded with extreme brutality.²¹⁷ The clash angered FLN leaders and made them question the resolve of the French government to find peace terms.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Cole, Joshua. *Entering History: The Memory of Police Violence in Paris, October 1961* in Lorcin, Patricia. *Algeria & France 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia* (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2006), 117.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

The Prefect of Police, Maurice Papon, would officially report only three Algerian deaths that night, all attributed to self-defense. Some 11,500 people were arrested for participating in the pro FLN demonstration and put through questioning.²¹⁸ But many, both immediately after and to this day, would come to take issue with Papon's account of the event. Many witnesses on the night of October 17 reported that they had seen police officers "hoisting demonstrators up over the parapets of the city's bridges and dropping them into the Seine." Their statements were corroborated when "in the days that followed, dozens of unidentified bodies were pulled from the Seine and deposited at the morgue."²¹⁹ Many immigrant families filed missing-persons reports, but never found out what had happened to their relatives after the protest. Due to the fact that the French police force and government attempted to cover up the true level of brutality used against Algerian protestors that night, there is no accurate estimate of how many actually died. At the time, the FLN estimated as many as two hundred, while more conservative sources say 32.²²⁰ President de Gaulle's plan to hold his country together appeared to be failing, and as a distraction tactic he attempted to push forward with the Evian accords. Cooperation with the FLN however would prove complicated for the remainder of 1961 -- the tragic events of October 17 were not the only road block to continued discussions for peace. In Algeria, a coalition formed between French military personnel and *Pieds-Noirs* in an attempt to thwart de Gaulle's plans for decolonization. European activists formally established what they called the *Organisation de l'Armée Secrète* or the OAS, led by some of the most prominent French generals of the Algerian war. They refused to recognize their President's plan for decolonization regardless of the national referendum, swearing to carry out terrorist attacks modeled after the FLN's tactics.²²¹

²¹⁸ Cole, *Entering History*, Lorcin, *Algeria & France 1800-2000*, 118-119.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Cole, *Entering History*, Lorcin, *Algeria & France 1800-2000*, 121.

²²¹ Evans, *Algeria France's Undeclared War*, 305.

The OAS Fights Back

On April 22, 1961, members of the top military command of the French army who had been stationed in Algeria attempted to defy their president.²²² The putsch was organized by Generals Gambiez, Challe, Jouhaud, Zeller, and Salan who in their first act arrested de Gaulle's key representatives in Algiers. In the name of military honor and to maintain a colony they had been fighting to keep under their influence for seven years, the men declared publically their plan for a three-month military operation. Their goal was not political control, but to keep the FLN from gaining command of what they believed to be France's territorial possession in North Africa, and to ensure "that their dead had not died for nothing."²²³ The military leaders felt it was their responsibility to protect *Pieds-Noirs* living in Algeria, along with pro-French Muslims who would be subject to the terror of the FLN if left unprotected. In mainland France, public opinion against the overthrow was strong. Most political groups, regardless of their differences, were outraged by the creation of the OAS. Within the army itself, only a fraction of soldiers posted in Algeria answered the call of the rebellious generals, while the rest remained loyal to President de Gaulle who denounced all orders given by the OAS.²²⁴ The coup was an incredible blow to the treaty talks which had begun with the FLN, and de Gualle wanted the betrayal crushed as quickly as possible. Clashes between loyal French forces, members of the OAS, and soldiers of the FLN raged on for months as the French government failed to call a lasting ceasefire. By September of 1961, the OAS escalated, carrying out attacks in Algeria such as machine-gunning Algerian cafes and killing random Algerian civilians, while *also* initiating attacks in mainland France. An assassination attempt against President de Gaulle was organized but failed.²²⁵ The climate of fear fostered

²²² Delarue, Jacques. *L'O.A.S. Contre De Gaulle* (Paris, Arthème Fayard, 1994), 56.

²²³ Evans, *Algeria France's Undeclared War*, 294-297.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ Evans, *Algeria France's Undeclared War*, 304.

by the OAS in 1961 would bleed into 1962 during what became known as “The Battle of Paris”.

In January of 1962 alone, there were 48 OAS bombings in Paris. The attacks specifically targeted those figures in the metropole who supported Algerian independence, many of whom had signed *Le manifeste de 121*, like Jean-Paul Sartre. However, in February of that year, one instance truly turned the public against the project of the OAS. The organization blew up the home of Culture Minister André Malraux, who fortunately was not home at the time. However, the blast horrifically injured the four-year-old daughter of Malraux’s neighbor, Delphine Renard. The French press plastered the city with images of the young girl in the aftermath, and it was her tragedy that truly sparked mass protest against the OAS.²²⁶ In response, during the fall of 1962, thousands of Parisian students marched for peace in the name of Delphine Renard. As many as 10,000 gathered around the Bastille on a December night chanting “OAS-As-sas-sins” in defiance of a ban on political gatherings that had been called by the Minister of the Interior with the hope of defusing tensions.²²⁷ The police once again responded with extreme brutality and many of the young demonstrators rushed to find refuge in the Charonne Metro station. But it was locked, and as a result, in the mayhem, eight people were crushed in their attempt to flee the batons of the police. This apex of violence in Paris put even further pressure on de Gaulle to reconvene the Evian talks and to reach an agreement for a ceasefire with Algeria.²²⁸

Conclusion: Independence is declared

Finally, on March 7, 1962 after eight years of conflict, an agreement was signed at Evian.²²⁹ The accord was so complicated that the document written by GRPA and French

²²⁶ Evans, *Algeria France’s Undeclared War*, 309-310.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Evans, *Algeria France’s Undeclared War*, 310.

government officials came to a lengthy 93 pages. The final decisions outlined a plan for cooperation between the two countries and would be both criticized and applauded on both sides. Algeria was given full independence and the right to self-determination, *but* begrudgingly accepted France's demands for influence in the Sahara. While the Algerian government would have full sovereignty over petroleum reserves found there, it was agreed that Algeria would give French petroleum companies preferential treatment in trade. France was also given the right to maintain a small military presence in the country. Fears of the rise of a French post-colonialist system led to many disagreements between Algerian officials with concerns to these concessions. However, it was deemed a necessary loss in the face of the prospect of France's recognition of Algeria as a completely independent nation, free from colonial politics.²³⁰ With regards to the ever-defiant OAS, its "secret army" refused to capitulate until four months later in June of 1962.²³¹ As for the groups they had vowed to protect, the future was unclear. For the *Pied-Noir* population, they were forced to decide whether to stay in Algeria or flee to France where by the majority of the population, they were stereotyped as fascist and racist. Their humiliation became known as *l'exode*, or the exodus, as many did eventually cross the Mediterranean to seek the refuge of *la mère patrie*. Large numbers of those who stayed were attacked or murdered through rampant vigilante justice carried out by former FLN soldiers and angry Algerian civilians.

The betrayal felt by the former colonist population, (which felt abandoned both by the Algerian nation and by the French government) cut deep and fostered a stark conservative politics among repatriates upon their return to France.²³² The French government did however, make effort to frame *Pieds-Noirs* as moral, Christian family units who in fact never left their ancestral home to make it easier for them to "reintegrate."²³³ But for those Muslim

²³⁰ Naylor, *France and Algeria*, 37.

²³¹ Naylor, *France and Algeria*, 39.

²³² Naylor, *France and Algeria*, 42-45.

²³³ Cohen, *The Harkis, Lorcins, Algeria & France 1800-2000*, 172.

Algerians who had supported French colonialism and fought on the side of French forces, the consequences were far more severe. These “traitors,” known as *les Harkis*, were murdered in the thousands by victorious forces in Algeria after the Evian accords. For those who escaped to France along with the *Pieds-Noirs*, they faced a lack luster welcome, racism, and a lack of economic support in the metropole. Finding housing and resources for the thousands of refugees that flooded France after the war was a disorganized failure. In all, there had been a million French in Algeria in 1961. Just four years later that number had been reduced to as few as 70,000.²³⁴ But regardless of the changes brought by decolonization, the legacy of French colonialism in Algeria has gone relatively unaddressed and has bled into contemporary relationships between the two countries.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3: The Civilizing Mission Comes to the Metropole

After considering this history which is not widely known, taught, or incorporated in modern academic discourse, it is important to contemplate what legacy it has left behind. The scars of colonial subjugation and war are today remembered, or *forgotten*, in order to spread certain cultural, political, and social agendas in mainland France. In this chapter, I will exhibit the consequences of the memory, nostalgia, and historiography of French colonialism in Algeria – all of which play pertinent roles in the lives of Algerian immigrants and their descendants today in France. Algerians who relocated to France immediately after World War II, during or following the war for independence, and in the more recent past during the civil war that rocked Algeria in the 90s, are witnessing a reemergence of the past. It appears that as the number of French citizens of Algerian descent grow, so too does islamophobia, racism, political subjugation, prejudicial violence, economic disenfranchisement, and relegation to second citizenship. Many of these struggles have evolved from those faced by their parents, grandparents, and ancestors, giving new life to colonial structures in recent decades. The same civilizing mission and colonial war that France imposed on Northern Africa now waits for immigrants and their descendants on the very shores from which it originated. Thus, we must speak of a neo-colonial system present in modern day France and what some call the “colonialism boomerang,” or the returning of colonial violence to its home address. I argue that the structure of the *new* civilizing mission, focused on defining what it means to be or become “French,” has brought the vestiges of colonial war to the streets of Paris, Bordeaux, and Nice. The way that the colonial history of Algeria is remembered or forgotten has led to the exclusion and alienation of Algerians living in France, constructing a new system of right-wing extremism and violent terrorism. These developments hail from the past two centuries of traumatic colonial history which are being avoided with tangible consequences.

In 2006, the very same Henri Alleg who wrote the explosive account *La Question*, collaborated with other academics specializing in colonial Algeria to create a collection of essays, *Algeria and France: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia 1800-2000*. The goal of these intellectuals was to analyze the legacy left behind by the Algerian war and to investigate how the topic is approached today in France. This had become necessary in response to tensions created by immigration debates and public testimonies about torture that rose to the surface in the early 2000s. Alleg claims that the subject of colonialism and war in Algeria (especially with regards to torture) are taboo and often not discussed in modern day France due to the fact that the “embers still burn.”²³⁵ He outlines the complexity of the issue of anti-Arab racism in modern day France by listing the sheer number of players that form part of the issue – the *Beurs* (or the *verlan* slang for *arabe* in reference to the children or grandchildren of North African immigrants), the descendants of the *Harkis*, and then of course former *Pieds-Noirs* and their families all play roles in contemporary conflict surrounding the inheritance of colonial history.²³⁶ Each population has experienced being “Algerian” differently, telling different tales of relocation to France or of their upbringing in the hexagon. The groups also ardently claim different perspectives on injustices of the colonial period. The discrepancies in the historiography produced by each group is important to dissect as Alleg’s colleague Patricia Lorcin states, Algeria is as “vital to France’s sense of itself” today as it was to Algeria’s identity during the era of colonialism. According to Lorcin, “who is entitled to speak” on this relationship and the “fantasies of the past determined by the needs of the present,” are aspects of the French-Algerian relationship that directly inform modern day hostilities.²³⁷ Those “fantasies of the past” are playing out in all the same sectors once ruled

²³⁵ Alleg, Henri. *Some Thoughts by Way of a Preface* in Lorcin, Patricia. *Algeria & France 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia* (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2006), xi-xii.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ Alleg, *Some Thoughts by Way of a Preface*, Lorcin, *Algeria & France 1800-2000*, xxi.

by the civilizing mission – through education, economics, religion, and politics in modern day France.

The Plight of Les Harkis

Before embarking on an analysis of the “new civilizing mission,” one must first understand the experiences of re-entry or introduction to French culture endured by groups who fled Algeria after the war. No case study is more telling however than the plight of the *Harkis*, or the Algerian soldiers who fought to defend French presence and colonial power during the war for independence. By the end of 1960, nearly 120,000 had served the French army and had been frequently used as propaganda seeking to devalue the anti-colonial movement of the indigenous population. As a result of their “poster-child” status, the FLN targeted the *Harkis* with an intense ferocity during the conflict, often mutilating their bodies as “traitors.”²³⁸ Most of the *Harkis* joined the ranks of the army for one of three reasons – either they had suffered the brutality of the FLN, needed the money and amenities provided by service, or were simply coerced by French army officials. Even though they were considered a true section of the army, *Harkis* were seen more as workers than soldiers, frequently tasked with projects that required manual labor. They were segregated from French soldiers and were not armed as well as their European counterparts.²³⁹ By the end of the war, the French government became worried that soldiers of Algerian origin may turn against their superiors as it became more apparent that independence could be possible and began reducing the numbers of enlisted *Harkis*. However, when the Gaullist government entered into negotiations with the GRPA at Evian, the issue of what to do with remaining and former *Harkis* was not addressed. The anticipation was not originally to relocate them to France, but the concept was proposed as the FLN began seeking out the pro-French soldiers

²³⁸ Cohen, William B. *The Harkis: History and Memory* in Lorcin, Patricia. *Algeria & France 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia* (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2006), 164-165.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

and murdering them in large numbers. It became clear by 1962 that the remaining *Harkis* in Algeria were at great risk of suffering the “justice” of the newly autonomous Algerian government.²⁴⁰ However, higher-up officials in France “were opposed to the possible inflow of potentially a million French loyalists and their families.” General de Gaulle himself said that if the *Harkis* were killed by the new Algerian state that it wasn’t his government’s responsibility.²⁴¹ This was juxtaposed with the French government’s willingness to readmit *Pieds-Noirs* civilians, even those who had openly supported the OAS. The true concern was whether or not the *Harkis* were considered “French enough” to be relocated to mainland France due to their religion and ethnicity. It was even suggested that some among them could be supporters of the FLN planning to carry out acts of terrorism in the metropole (no such concerns were raised for the returning European settler population). In the meantime, it is estimated that the FLN-run government killed some 100,000 *Harkis* on Algerian soil as the French government debated.²⁴²

Eventually due to an outcry among French army officials who could not protect their Maghrebin soldiers and also pressure from various political factions, the French government assumed responsibility for a portion of the Algerian soldiers who had protected the tricolor. About 25,000 *Harkis* were relocated to hexagonal France while another 63,000 desperately sought entry through unofficial means.²⁴³ Once in France however, they found new hardships even upon escaping the FLN – they were immediately segregated from European society, many were even placed in former internment camps the Vichy government had used to house Jews slated for deportation. *Harkis* and their descendants faced racism, economic hardship brought on by workplace prejudice, and poor access to education. Caught between the title of traitor to the new Algerian nation and feeling unwelcome in France, many *Harkis* attempted

²⁴⁰ Cohen, *The Harkis*, Lorcin, *Algeria & France 1800-2000*, 166-168.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Cohen, *The Harkis*, Lorcin, *Algeria & France 1800-2000*, 169.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

to hide their origins. Many families began naming their children French names instead of ones associated with Islam in the hopes of sparing the next generation from anti-Arab prejudice.²⁴⁴ As a population they were ignored and unrecognized as veterans – the *Harkis* served as a stark reminder of the humiliation of the French state had faced in Algeria. In a study done on the population and their families in the 1980s, one man said,

We were never liked. I am always an Arab. From all points of view, I am French, but we are kept out of the system. We desire total integration, we should not be thought of as immigrants. We have no rights, we are called Algerians.²⁴⁵

Thus, the *Harkis* had not only sacrificed their lives and their right to safely live in their homeland, but were also denied entry into French culture. They could not shed the label of “Arab” or “Algerian” even if they no longer identified as such due to the effects of widely believed stereotypes in metropolitan France. It was not until the 1990s and early 2000s that the *Harkis* population was regarded as full citizens by the French government and awarded pensions, medical services, loans, and compensation for their service to the Republic. In 2001 President Chirac also acknowledged the fault of France in abandoning thousands of *Harkis*, left to the retribution of the FLN. It is believed that *Harkis* and their descendants number more than 400,000 today.²⁴⁶ However many of the struggles faced by *Harkis* right after the war still go unaddressed today and are also endured by other groups of Algerian immigrants now trying to achieve equality in French society.

Colonial Education Today

After the end of decolonization, the French government went to great lengths to hide a history it viewed as shameful. The defacing of France’s humanitarian traditions, the

²⁴⁴ Cohen, *The Harkis*, Lorcin, *Algeria & France 1800-2000*, 170-171.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ Cohen, *The Harkis*, Lorcin, *Algeria & France 1800-2000*, 178-179.

accusation of war crimes, and lastly the military defeat of the colonial era all influenced a systemic silence that has characterized these topics since the independence of Algeria.²⁴⁷ As Lorcin posits, the “imperative of national unity necessitated their internalization until such a time as their decisiveness would no longer pose a significant threat.”²⁴⁸ This began when President de Gaulle enacted an amnesty law in 1962 to absolve all French officials implicated in war crimes of guilt to facilitate the process of leaving Algerian colonialism behind. Later in 1968, the National Assembly would issue another amnesty further blanketing the war and ensuring that no one was ever persecuted for illegal activity in the Algerian war. Those amnesties also covered the police officials who had taken part in the 1961 massacre of Algerian protestors in 1961, effectively erasing the event from public discourse.²⁴⁹ In the 1970s and 80s as historians sought to write about the events of French colonization and the Algerian war, they found their efforts blocked by the state which restricted public access to archives containing pertinent information. In addition, since the framing of this history was so contested by so many groups in terms of its framing, historians found it nearly impossible to write an account with which both French and Algerian critics agree.²⁵⁰ With all these roadblocks in place, widespread knowledge of colonialism in Algeria and its war for independence gradually began to decline with the passage of time. This decline is best illustrated through public school textbooks in France and how the history was taught to students in the late 90s and early 2000s.

For a history that is so recent and so pertinent to France’s sense of self today, a shockingly small amount of attention is paid to it in the national educational system.

²⁴⁷ Lorcin, Patricia. *Algeria & France 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia* (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2006), xxv.

²⁴⁸ Lorcin, *Algeria & France 1800-2000*, xxiv.

²⁴⁹ Cole, *Entering History*, Lorcin, *Algeria & France 1800-2000*, 118-119.

²⁵⁰ McCormack, Jo. *Memory in History, Nation Building, and Identity: Teaching about the Algerian War in France* in Lorcin, Patricia. *Algeria & France 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia* (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2006), 138-39.

Throughout the 90s the amount of space dedicated to colonialism in North Africa and to the Algerian war was gradually reduced as the public-school program was altered by the state. In a study done in 1983 it was found that an average of 9 to 10 pages were once dedicated to teaching students about the conflict. However, in a 1998 study, it was discovered that this was dramatically reduced to 1.5 pages of text out of textbooks that were an average of 350 to 400 pages long.²⁵¹ As far as the pressure put on teachers in the late 1990s with regards to their focus on the Algerian War one teacher said, “I know that this year I’m dwelling less on, let’s say on details, or rather on particular points. And the Algerian War, if we study it, involves going into detail.”²⁵² In addition, it was found that even though the Algerian War was only a short 56 years ago, participants who are still alive are not invited to add testimony to the classroom. The practice of inviting veterans to speak to students reportedly was used as an educational tool in the 80s in some schools, but has stopped due to altered curriculums that set aside little time for the topic.²⁵³ Perhaps most problematically, the issue of war crimes related to torture (a central issue to this history) is all but ignored in the classroom for fear of “inflaming the memory conflicts that exist and that one can detect in class.”²⁵⁴

The effects of this systematic reduction of time and effort spent on teaching students about colonialism in Algeria are two-fold – not only does it continue the cycle of erasing the narrative of Algerian history which began with the co-opting of the educational system during the era of the civilizing mission, but it also perpetuates the identity crisis or “the Muslim question” first articulated during that time period. Descendants of Algerians living in France today are not taught their own history, leading to what is termed the *difficile identification*, or a difficulty identifying with either being Algerian or French.

²⁵¹ McCormack, Jo. *Memory in History, Nation Building, and Identity, Lorcine, Algeria & France, 1800-2000*, 139.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ McCormack, Jo. *Memory in History, Nation Building, and Identity, Lorcine, Algeria & France, 1800-2000*, 140-143.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The eighteen-year-old son of a man who was thrown into the Seine in Paris on 17 October 1961 and who was witness at the recent trial in which Maurice Papon brought proceedings against the journalist Jean-Luc Einaudi for slander, spoke of how he had learned of these events: not at school, but more through his father.²⁵⁵

Students are shown in history classes what it means to be French, culturally and traditionally, which may clash with their familial and personal experiences. In 2005, the French state even passed the Debré 2005-158 law stating that schools were required to teach the “positive aspects of the French colonial experience.”²⁵⁶ The law was quickly repealed a year later, but the damage had been done – it was clear that the state preferred a specific sanitized version of colonial history in Algeria be taught in the classroom. This erasure and censoring of the past, especially when combined with a sense of not belonging in the present, leads students of Algerian descent to question whether they qualify as either French or Algerian, or perhaps *neither*. In ways reminiscent of the civilizing mission, the French school system enforces only one possible way of “being French,” thereby rendering “unassimilable” those populations with diverging cultural and linguistic heritages. This model of “Frenchness” is even imposed in the cafeteria.

This year a debate that began a couple years ago in France is coming to a head. Multiple politicians have stated that they do not believe that French public schools should provide a pork-free alternative to students who do not consume it on religious grounds. In January of 2018, Julien Sanchez, the mayor of the small town of Beaucaire in southern France, actually took the step to ban the accommodation. A member of the Front National, the 34-year-old states that religious exceptions violate France’s Republican values and that

²⁵⁵ McCormack, Jo. *Memory in History, Nation Building, and Identity, Lorcín, Algeria & France, 1800-2000*, 147.

²⁵⁶ Bancel, Nicolas, Pascal Blanchard, and Dominic Thomas. *The Colonial Legacy in France: Fracture, Rupture, and Apartheid* (Indiana, University of Indiana Press, 2017), 4.

school cafeterias “are not four-star restaurants.”²⁵⁷ The public message Sanchez is trying to send to the public is that eating pork is part of the French identity, and that if Muslims or Jews do not wish to comply, they can choose not to have a provided meal at school. While Sanchez claims his decision concerns maintaining French secularism, most see it as a specific targeting of Islam that exacerbates a feeling of exclusion many Muslim students already face. This debate began in 2015 in Dijon where the mayor of Chalon-sur-Saone removed pork substitutes from school cafeteria menus. The case went to the court of Dijon where it was ruled unconstitutional in 2017, as it was viewed to be a violation of the rights of the children implicated.²⁵⁸ During the 2016 election season, the issue was also widely discussed when Nicolas Sarkozy (hoping for reelection) also expressed support for banning special accommodation.

If a little guy’s family does not eat pork and the menu at the cafeteria is a slice of ham and fries, well he skips the ham and eats a double helping of fries. In a republic, it’s the same rule and the same menu for everyone.²⁵⁹

It is yet to be seen whether the decision made by Julien Sanchez will stand in court. But regardless, school cafeterias have thus now become courtrooms through which France is debating its identity and whether youth of North African origin or who adhere to the Islamic faith, fit into that mold. During the colonial era, the same question was posed regarding the dual identity of Muslim or Algerian French subjects, and their capacity to integrate fully into

²⁵⁷ Descours, Guillaume. “Beaucaire: le maire FN supprime les menus sans porc dans les cantines scolaires,” *Le Figaro*, 09/01/2018, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2018/01/09/01016-20180109ARTFIG00109-beaucaire-le-maire-fn-supprime-les-menus-sans-porc-dans-les-cantines-scolaires.php>.

²⁵⁸ *L’express*, “La mairie FN de Beaucaire supprime les menus sans porc des cantines scolaires,” 08/01/2018, https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/fn/la-mairie-fn-de-beaucaire-supprime-les-menus-sans-porc-des-cantines-scolaires_1974396.html.

²⁵⁹ McAuley, James, “French mayor bans pork substitutes in school meals, saying he’s defending secularism,” 01/15/2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/french-mayor-bans-pork-substitutes-in-school-meals-saying-hes-defending-secularism/2018/01/14/3442fc98-f64b-11e7-9af7-a50bc3300042_story.html?utm_term=.bba01785d4bc.

French culture. It appears that the question of this “incompatibility” continues and is yet to be answered.

The Modern Exclusion of Muslims in France

Following World War II when many Algerians were invited to the metropole to help rebuild hexagonal France, it was not expected that they would become permanent residents. They were welcomed by the French government as “guest workers” with the expectation that after the war recovery labor effort concluded, they would return to their families in Algeria with the wages they had earned.²⁶⁰ However, many immigrants remained, and quickly found themselves at odds with the French secular tradition which relegated them to religious invisibility. According to law, it is illegal to wear conspicuous symbols of religion in the public sphere. The public sphere encompasses spaces such as governmental buildings, schools, and political venues in which the absolute separation of Church and state is required. While the law does not specifically ban any specific form of religious expression, it does, by its sheer nature, single out the Muslim and Jewish communities who wear visible signs of their faith on a regular basis. The issue of the Muslim headscarf or *foulard* for women came to a head in 1989 “when three teenage girls were expelled from their public middle school for refusing to remove their headscarves.”²⁶¹ The case received a lot of media coverage and led to a decade of confusion concerning the legality of Muslim visibility in French society. Finally, in 2004 President Chirac created a law stating that certain religious symbols were to be banned from public schools, including the Muslim veil.²⁶² Immigrant communities,

²⁶⁰ Najimdeen, Bakare, *Muslims and the Charlie Hebdo Saga*, (Policy Perspectives Vol. 12, Pluto Journals, 2015) 82.

²⁶¹ Jelloun, Tahar Ben, Abdelwahab Meddeb, Amin Maalouf, Albert Memmi, Leila Sebbar, and Yamina Benguigui. *Islam and the French Republic: The Affair of the Muslim Headscarf* in Bourget, Carine. *The Star, the Cross, and the Crescent: Religions and Conflicts in Francophone Literature from the Arab World* (Maryland, Lexington Books, 2010), 115.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

especially of North African and Algerian origin, were specifically targeted by this legislation, further estranging them from French society. The young Muslim community in France has been very vocal against such prejudice claiming it relegates them to a second citizenship status and fuels an overall sentiment that while they may be full French citizens, that they are in fact foreign. In an interview with a young woman from Tunisia, she explains that she feels she is expected to let go of her religion to *fully* become French in the eyes of society.

France confuses assimilation with integration . . . Assimilation involves erasing. I don't want to erase my origins. I don't want to forget that my parents immigrated here from Tunisia . . . it means that to be French I have to eat pork and drink alcohol . . . I am reduced to my social origins, my ethnic origins. And that's a problem.²⁶³

Many members of the Muslim community are thus accused of fighting against integration, whereas they are actually protesting *assimilation*. The young Maghrebin population is simultaneously proud of being French while at the same time being rejected by the state and framed as a threat to “core republican values.” However, the issue of religious discrimination only became worse following the catastrophic terrorist attacks on the early 2000s.

After the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States witnessed an extreme increase in islamophobia and created structures for national defense that targeted Muslims in its territory. The same hysteria was felt in Europe, particularly in France, which became more suspicious of its Muslim and immigrant communities. Not unlike American news sources, the French media began aggressively portraying Muslims as terrorists, solidly creating an association between the two terms. Police surveillance of Muslim neighborhoods increased as did racial and religious profiling. By law the French police have the right to stop anyone (including of North-African origin) for an identity check

²⁶³ Beaman, Jean, *Citizen Outsider: Children of North African Immigrants in France* (California, University of California Press, 2017), 98.

to inspect papers. People of Maghrebin descent became “six to eight times more likely than whites to undergo ‘pat downs’,” creating a state sanctioned link between dark skin, Muslim faith, and criminal activity.²⁶⁴ Specifically, the issue of the veil became even more complex as the presence of the garment was seen as proof of an international rise in Islamism. Thus the outlawing of its usage became a national security issue. By 2010, the French state went even further in banning the usage of the burka on the grounds that it made it impossible to see the identity of its wearer, which was considered a terrorist risk. The extreme nature of this legislation was exhibited in a case in 2016 when the ban was extended to the “burkini,” or the swimsuit version of the burka. In multiple coastal French cities, “photos of Muslim women on beaches who were fined and forced to remove their suits flooded the news and social media.”²⁶⁵ The Prime Minister at the time actually publically referred to the garment as a form of enslavement. Thus, in the same way that the civilizing mission discouraged the compatibility of Islam and French culture in North Africa, the modern French state is seeking to further push immigrants of Maghrebin descent to the margins of society. In the same way that the French army took liberties to search women wearing traditional Muslim garb during the Algerian War under suspicion of terrorism, the French police are religiously profiling Muslims on the metro and in public space today. Islam is still viewed as an archaic immoral religion – a vestige of a colonial past we have lost track of. Such framing does not only come from religious discrimination however. It also comes from the economic disenfranchisement of Muslim immigrants and Algerian descendants today.

²⁶⁴ Beaman, *Citizen Outsider*, 98.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Economic Inequality

Following World War II, France faced a crisis of destruction and desperately needed manual labor volunteers to rebuild entire villages that had been obliterated by German forces. Due to high casualty rates, manpower was scarce, and the metropole was forced to call upon her colonies for help. North African families, in particular from Algeria, were invited to come assist during the late 1940s and 50s, with the promise of wages and services to improve their quality of life. However, finding housing was difficult, not just for Algerian immigrants but also for French citizens in the post-war period. To give Maghrebin workers a place to stay, haphazard residential communities called *Habitations à Loyer Modéré* (“rent-controlled housing” or HLMs) were hastily constructed on the outskirts of Paris, packing immigrants in tightly. Such buildings were dormitory-like with collective bathrooms and kitchens. Other immigrants were forced to live in what became known as *bidonvilles* or shantytowns where basic amenities were not available.²⁶⁶ Thus the newly formed Algerian community which rose in size throughout the period of the Algerian War, was quickly segregated from the rest of French society. It became clear that the Algerian immigrant population had planted its roots in mainland France, creating an issue of proximity – many French workers did not want to live near “Arab” communities. As a result, the French government adopted a system of cycling housing that would make it possible for Algerians to obtain lodging but keep different racial groups separate.

In some cases, white, French residents moved out of quickly and poorly constructed apartments made undesirable by decay and disrepair, leaving space for the working poor and immigrants . . . the semi-independent *grand ensemble* neighborhoods of which social reformers dreamed often became de facto ghettos by the 1970s.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Lyons, Amelia H. *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State during Decolonization* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013), 115-116.

²⁶⁷ Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole*, 130.

Algerians were barred from buying better housing both due to a fiscal incapability to pay for better living conditions, but also due to a system of racism in which landlords turned families away based on their ethnic origins. The resulting ghettos, or as they have become known, the *banlieues*, still exist today. This is the modern-day version of the *Kasbah*, or the Muslim quartier, completely separate from the wealthier, *Pied-Noir* communities that once existed in Algeria.

The *banlieues* of modern day France have become a tense topic of discussion in recent years. In 2005 it was found that the quality of schools in such neighborhoods lead to a rate of failure two times higher than in wealthier corners of big cities (particularly in Paris). The rate of unemployment among the descendants of Algerian immigrants was also much higher than that of white French citizens. In fact, the *Observatoire des Discriminations* published that people of North African descent were *six times less likely* to be hired than a “Jean-Pierre” from a better neighborhood. In addition, familial revenue in the *banlieues* was found to be much lower than that of the average French family, in addition to access to medical services.²⁶⁸ Unfortunately these communities are also subject to police violence and high rates of crime, which often lead to deaths.

Beyond the assassinations [minorities shot by the police], arbitrary arrests, routine police brutality, and everyday forms of harassment . . . the reality is that a racism rooted in the colonial and postcolonial history is on the rise in France because many people, such as the children from immigrant families – including those who *are* French citizens – are not considered equal but rather natives, living on ‘reserves’.²⁶⁹

The Algerian community in France is not only racially segregated, but also kept economically immobile. Without many monetary options and desperate to make a living,

²⁶⁸ Vidal, Dominique. *From Colonial History to the Banlieues (1961-2006)* in Blanchard, Pascal, Sandrine Lemaire, Nicolas Bancel, and Dominic Thomas. *Colonial Culture in France Since the Revolution* (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2014), 521-522.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

many people living in the *banlieues* resort to crime, further feeding the immoral stereotype given to them by the media and French government. In 2005, following the accidental electrocution of two young men who ran from the police to allegedly avoid senseless questioning, the youth of North African *banlieues* rioted against the inequalities they face on a daily basis in Paris. Just as Maurice Papon had chosen to do in 1961, and the French army in Algeria before him, the Prime Minister of France called for a curfew to be placed on their neighborhoods:

After a series of mostly ineffectual pledges by French leaders to restore order and crack down on vandals, the government invoked a 50-year-old law, dating from the colonial war in Algeria, which gives local officials the authority to call curfews, among other expanded law-enforcement powers.²⁷⁰

The descendants of Algerians burned vehicles, schools, gyms and stores to protest the reality that the French state had made them “victims of academic failure, unemployment, and idleness.”²⁷¹ Their anger and violence is reminiscent of their Algerian ancestors who took part in many protests in the old colony, including those at Sétif. The same educational, religious, and economic discrimination that accompanied the old civilizing mission is still being practiced today, including in the realm of politics.

Pied-Noir Right-Wing Politics Come to the Metropole

In colonial Algeria, the European settler population controlled local politics. It was not until after independence that Algerians claimed their right to an autonomous government and were able to repeal many of the discriminatory statutes that were put in place by French colonists. However today, right-wing anti-Arab politics left over from the colonial era have

²⁷⁰ Landler, Mark. “France Declares Emergency; Curfews to Be Imposed,” *The New York Times*, 11/09/05, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/09/world/europe/france-declares-emergency-curfews-to-be-imposed.html>.

²⁷¹ Vidal, *From Colonial History to the Banlieues (1961-2006)*, Blanchard, Pascal, Sandrine Lemaire, Nicolas Bancel, and Dominic Thomas, *Colonial Culture in France Since the Revolution*, 518.

taken a firm grasp of French elections. Starting in the 1980s, a political party named *Le Front National* began gaining popularity for its anti-immigrant policy and conservative goals. The party was led by none other than Jean-Marie le Pen, a former soldier and supporter of the OAS during the Algerian War. Le Pen served in both the war in Indochina, as well as in the Battle of Algiers during which he reportedly participated in the torturing Algerian prisoners. In a statement in 1962 he said, “I tortured because it was necessary to do so,” but when accused of such crimes by newspapers 1985, Le Pen sued for libel, claiming the Left aimed to slander him.²⁷² As president of the FN, Le Pen pressed for what he said was a loss of esteem for family, army, flag, and country, quickly becoming well known as a staunch nationalist. The same values, including the identification of France as a white, Catholic state, hail from the fascist ideologies of the *Croix de feu*, the Vichy government, and the OAS of colonial Algeria. On the national stage, Le Pen and his party were accused of being fascist, anti-Semitic, and racist. As a result, the FN did not have much success until 1984 when the party won more of the national vote than ever before on a platform of anti-immigration, with strong support from regions where ex-patriated *Pieds-Noirs* had settled.²⁷³ The party capitalized on growing fear of economic competition with immigrant or minority workers due to the economic crisis and high unemployment rate of the time.²⁷⁴ Although the party did not make it into the final round of the election, it was clear that the power of the FN was growing and continued to do so throughout the 90s and early 2000s with the rise of xenophobia which skyrocketed after the attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York.

By 2012, Jean-Marie Le Pen passed off the leadership of his party to his daughter, Marine Le Pen who began a project of *dediabolisation*, or the “de-demonizing” of the FN. Her goal was to make the party more mainstream and acceptable to a national audience that

²⁷² Peter Davies, *The Extreme Right in France, 1789 to the Present: From De Maistre to Le Pen* (London, Routledge, 2002), 109.

²⁷³ Davies, *The Extreme Right in France*, 193-199.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

had deemed it too extreme. To win over the public, Le Pen began using a lot of terms such as *laïcité* (secularism), *republic*, *identity*, and *liberty* in her speeches. In this way, she sought to convince viewers that her party championed the *true* nature of “Frenchness”.²⁷⁵ In an interview with Al Jazeera in 2012 Madame Le Pen said with regards to immigration and Islam,

I do not take Islam to be an enemy in any circumstance. I say that there is a major problem of massive and anarchical immigration in our country which creates the conditions for conflict, for the disintegration of society which disturbs our indivisibility, our laws, including our law on secularism. I think that a huge majority of French people agree with me on this.²⁷⁶

Thus, she frames immigrants, in particular those who adhere to Islam, as responsible for the injustices they face in modern day France. Le Pen continues the interview by making clear that she believes that the statutes of secular law need to be intensified, only to then state that France is a “Christian civilization”. Politically the goal of the FN quickly became the rendering of North African and Muslim communities more invisible, catering to voters who support more severe anti-Arab policies. However, Marine Le Pen saw the height of her political career in the recent 2017 election in which her party won the highest percentage of votes in its history. According to polls her support mostly came from blue collar workers, rural dwellers, citizens from small towns, and those with low yearly earnings.²⁷⁷ Each of these groups either see much lower exposure to urbanized, segregated immigrant communities, or find themselves in competition with the Maghrebin labor force. But perhaps the biggest key to Le Pen’s success and the perpetuation of the new civilizing mission, was

²⁷⁵ Agnès Maillot, *Setting the Agenda? The Front National and the 2017 French Presidential Election* (Irish Studies in International Affairs, Royal Irish Academy, 2017), 47.

²⁷⁶ Al Jazeera English, “Talk to Al Jazeera – Marine Le Pen: The threat of radical Islam,” Youtube, 12/17/2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iai4tZKuB7E>.

²⁷⁷ Maillot, *Setting the Agenda?*, 47.

her focus on the recent terrorist attacks that have taken place in France between 2015 and present day.

The Colonial War Continues –Modern Day Terrorism

On January 7, 2015 two French brothers of Algerian descent entered the offices of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Saïd and Chérif Kouachi shot twenty-two people, killing eleven, and successfully escaped by murdering a Muslim police officer.²⁷⁸ The brothers were seeking revenge for what they believed to be mocking, sacrilegious depictions of the prophet Mohammed and Muslims in recent editions of the magazine. The magazine was accustomed to receiving death threats and was constantly sued for its harsh illustrations and portrayals of various minority groups (however it spared no sector of French society, including the Catholic Church). But the violent act of the Kouachi brothers forever changed the discussion of freedom of speech in France. In response to the attack, hundreds of thousands gathered at the Place de la République in the center of Paris to chant, *Je suis Charlie*, or “I am Charlie,” in solidarity with the writers linked to the magazine.²⁷⁹ The event resulted in a strong reassertion of “the French identity” and isolationism which turned all immigrants into suspicious individuals. Media coverage enflamed stereotypes, showing images of the Kouachi brothers and emphasizing their family’s country of origin. In the following weeks, “France witnessed more than 128 anti-Muslim attacks”, and the government began taking steps to intensify national security measures.²⁸⁰ To combat rising islamophobia, many French Muslim citizens began their own cry of, *Je suis Ahmed*, or “I am Ahmed,” in reference to the Muslim police officer who was also killed by the Kouachi brothers.²⁸¹ But many citizens who

²⁷⁸ Stephen J. Toope and Edward Iacobucci, *After the Paris Attacks: Responses in Canada, Europe and Around the Globe* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2015), 3.

²⁷⁹ Beaman, *Citizen Outsider*, 93-94.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

considered themselves *français de souche*, or “pure French” did not make the differentiation between radical terrorist minorities and the average Muslim population. Long held associations between a “terrorist nature” or “violent culture” and Algerian heritage left over from traumatic memories of FLN terrorism, made it easy to frame average French citizens of Algerian or Maghrebin descent as agents of radical Islam. The linkage of the colonial period to this act of terrorism becomes clear when one considers the concept of the “colonialism boomerang.”

Al Qaeda took public responsibility for the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, adding to nationwide panic. However, contemporary analysis of groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS have been relatively shallow, not acknowledging their larger historical context and roots. The media has sought only to focus on the violence their soldiers utilize in terror, rather than to question where the origin of their doctrine and radicalization lie. What the Kouachi brothers and the agents of Al Qaeda and ISIS are really fighting against is what they see as imperial and colonial oppression wrought by countries like the United States, Great Britain, and France.

Awareness of the colonial past, bitterness as to post-colonial dynamics and resentment towards the local repressive regimes were carried over and linked to contemporary situations wherein the notion of revenging occupation and manipulation was featured regularly in the pronouncements of almost all the actors associated with Al Qaeda and IS.²⁸²

Such terrorist organizations operate within a dialectic of returning violence to the sender, whether in the war-torn countries of the Middle East or in the heart of metropolitan France. This mindset was illustrated in an interview conducted between Chérif Kouachi and a

²⁸² Mohamedou, Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould, *A Theory of ISIS: Political Violence and the Transformation of the Global Order* (Pluto Press, 2018), 174.

journalist on the French television news channel, BFM while on the run. The journalist seeks to uncover Kouachi's motives and inquires if he and his brother have killed anyone since their escape from the *Charlie Hebdo* offices. In response Kaouachi said simply, "We are not killers . . . We are defenders of the Prophet. We do not kill women . . . We are not like you. It is you that kill the children of Muslims in Iraq, in Syria, in Afghanistan."²⁸³ It is clear that Kouachi differentiated the violence of *vengeance* carried out by him and his brother from the colonial violence perpetrated by western countries in the Middle East. However, the attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* headquarters was only the first of a streak of events that have further intensified tensions surrounding anti-immigration.

Later that year, on November 13, 2015, a series of organized attacks occurred in multiple places around Paris. At the Stade de France soccer stadium, three suicide bombers detonated their devices, followed by several mass shootings at nearby cafés and restaurants in the eleventh arrondissement. In addition, at a concert at the Bataclan theatre, gunman took fire on civilians, taking hostages and blowing themselves up upon the arrival of French police. In all, the extremists killed 130 people, including several Maghrebin individuals.²⁸⁴ ISIS took responsibility for the coordinated attack, launching France into a state of emergency that lasted several months. President Hollande announced that he would give police forces the right to conduct raids without warrants, thus deepening nationwide islamophobia and racial profiling. However, the spate of violence did not end regardless of increased militarization. The following year on Bastille Day, July 14, 2016, Mohamed Lahouiej Bouhlel, a Tunisian born French citizen, drove a truck through a large crowd of people gathered for a firework show in Nice. He succeeded in killing eighty-four people and injured as many as 300. ISIS once again claimed responsibility and nationwide debates about

²⁸³ Mohamedou, *A Theory of ISIS*, 175.

²⁸⁴ Beaman, *Citizen Outsider*, 94.

the “unassimilability” of North African immigrants and Muslims took center stage, dominating popular media.²⁸⁵ In southern coastal cities like Nice which have high immigrant populations, hate crimes against Arabs markedly increased. In both cases, ISIS proclaimed the acts were necessary repercussion for French participation in airstrikes in Syria and Iraq. While most French Maghrebin immigrants and citizens often don’t have direct ties to family in Syria and Iraq, there is a strong sense of solidarity with Middle Eastern peoples who share their faith and face the invasion of Western powers. For example, when President Trump banned the entry of immigrants from Iran, Syria, and Iraq into the United States, a large Maghrebin population in Paris protested, expressing a widespread sentiment that islamophobia is rising worldwide.²⁸⁶ This pan-Islamism is reminiscent of the worldwide anti-colonial movement that gained traction during the Algerian revolution, uniting countries from different hemispheres under the helm of a shared struggle. They believe it is the rejection of cultural citizenship that is radicalizing portions of France’s North African population.

Conclusion: *L'Oubli* and its Consequences

The question is now, does France have the right to shrug off its role in emboldening a system of radicalization which has motivated many of the French citizens involved in these attacks? As the nation continues to relegate North African immigrants, descendants of Algerian colonial subjects, and Muslim citizens to second citizenship, the “colonial boomerang” continues to come around. The new colonial agenda has taken the form of revisionist historiography paired with the imperialism of the War on Terror. Without understanding the shrouded history of French colonialism in Algeria and in other territories

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ Beaman, *Citizen Outsider*, 101.

of the Maghreb, it is impossible to understand the tensions that exist today and the harmful stereotypes that linger.

In Europe, the legacies of colonialism still play out in hugely damaging ways: in patterns of immigration that do not favor economic integration; in low education levels for second-generation immigrants; in the social isolation of some ethnic communities; in repeating patterns of exclusion rooted in colonial-era of who counts as part of the citizenry; and in profound frustration at the failed promise of a better life.²⁸⁷

The recognition of the historical context and the temporality of French colonialism, is necessary to avoid the effect of amnesia – the false belief that the past is further removed than it really is. French colonialism only ended a short 56 years ago and to ignore its everlasting linkage to the present makes it impossible to address the systems of oppression it created and that linger. Many historians term this phenomenon the “Algeria syndrome” with reference to what became known as the “Vichy Syndrome” during the post-World War II era.²⁸⁸ Due to the shameful and traumatic nature of the French government’s collaboration with Nazi Germany, all historical evidence of the partnership was suppressed and left undiscussed as if silence could delete it. Vichy was too complex and tense a subject to approach for a France that was trying to reconstruct itself. Currently historians believe the same phenomena is occurring with regards to the history of French colonialism in Algeria. Due to the fact decolonization is in its nature an inconclusive process (in reality it leaves permanent traces), France is dancing circles around the reality of its shared history with Algeria, alienating the inheritors of that relationship.

²⁸⁷ Toope, Stephen J. and Edward Iacobucci, *After the Paris Attacks*, 214.

²⁸⁸ McCormack, Jo, *Collective Memory: France and the Algerian War (1954-1962)* (Maryland, Lexington Books, 2007), 169.

Conclusion: Memory and Selective Amnesia

Around the world, methodologies of remembrance are contested. Especially with regards to historical trauma, different groups vie to put forth their narrative of choice about what and who mattered in the past. France is just beginning its process of scratching the complex historical surface of its colonial relationship with Algeria; the work of memory has a long way to go yet. Not only in terms of international relations between the hexagon and North Africa, but internally with French citizens of Maghrebin descent, more must be done to acknowledge scars. As historian Jo McCormack wrote in 2007 this is a paramount issue specifically in our current time:

At no other time in history has this process of coming to terms with the past been so important – rapid globalization, enhanced communication, extensive migration, and ‘the acceleration of history’ have all ensured that the dramatic ruptures of war, holocaust, and apartheid are important.²⁸⁹

McCormack posits that in a hyper connected world, both through the movement of human beings and the exchange of information, active memory is becoming more complex and necessary. This is even more pertinent today when one considers the recent developments brought on by new forms of terrorism and nationalist reactions. It has become incumbent upon nations to acknowledge history to avoid the resurfacing or continuation of past conflicts. France is beginning to witness the effects of a festering tension between disgruntled Maghrebin youth who refuse to continue to be called “foreign,” and young, extreme right-wing organizations who foretell the downfall of the “European identity.”²⁹⁰ Alarmist literature circulating and enflaming paranoia concerning the rising tide of North Africans and Muslims in France is drowning out the historical truth that the very reason for the presence of

²⁸⁹ McCormack, *Collective Memory*, 167.

²⁹⁰ Edward, Tyler and Georges Stovall. *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race* (Maryland, Lexington Books, 2003), 214.

that population is rooted in past colonial projects.²⁹¹ Since those projects were never fully put to rest, they continue to resurface.

Stereotypes have not disintegrated with *L'Algérie française*. The old institution of the *bureaux arabes* and its tactics used to infiltrate Algerian culture and Muslim doctrine can be seen in methodologies used today by French police forces. The negation of Algerian history by omission in French schools has taken hold in modern France. Economic racism that once denied Algerians access to certain lifestyles and jobs in colonial Algeria is now the contemporary cause of poverty among Maghrebin French civilians. The classification of Algerians as guilty terrorists until proven innocent has been witnessed through the militarization and special powers taken by the French state in response to the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks. Today, a lack of recognizing the formation of a post-colonial regime in France is furthering the exclusion of Algerians from French historical memory and society. In truth, Algerian culture is an integral part of current French culture through its culinary, literary, and musical influences. Algerians helped rebuild the French nation we know today from the ruins of World War II. And yet the presence of Algerian bodies and Islam in French culture is continuously erased and made invisible.

Fortunately, some historians are working to create a new historical consciousness to fight for the equality of North African French citizens. In 2012 Pascal Blanchard and Nicolas Bancel, two French historians who specialize in the colonial past, wrote a manifesto in conjunction with politician, Françoise Vergès. Published in the French newspaper, *Liberation*, the piece was titled *Manifeste pour un musée des histoires coloniales*, or *Manifesto for a Museum of Colonial Histories*.²⁹² The signatories of the document call for,

²⁹¹ Edward and Stovall, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 217.

²⁹² Blanchard, Pascal, Françoise Vergès, Nicolas Bancel, and Marc Cheb Sun. "Manifeste pour un Musée des Histoires Coloniales," *Libération*, 05/08/2012, http://next.liberation.fr/arts/2012/05/08/manifeste-pour-un-musee-des-histoires-coloniales_817262.

Since we are all the inheritors of this history, it needs to be transmitted through a large cultural institution. A place to put these pasts in context and in conversation, where the words and representations of ‘native peoples’ cross, the slaves, the colonists, the migratory workers in the colonies, the immigrant workers and their children in the Hexagon, the former soldiers, those who served in the reserves of the colonial armies, the *harkis*, the repatriates . . . all French citizens, all of without whom France would not be France. A place to inscribe the history of French society in global history. A place innovative and necessary. An exemplary place.²⁹³

For those who spend their life work studying France’s colonial history it is becoming impossible to ignore the absence of commemoration. The historians and activists who signed this manifesto believe that such a large and impactful part of France’s history should be at the very least made available to the public. They believe that the creation of a center of learning or a museum could serve to enlighten the public and remedy the selective amnesia that is contributing to tense relationships between the groups listed above. Such a project would recognize the reality that all these collections of identities play a role in the definition of what and who is “French” today, and that the rejection of such leads to violence and hatred. The creation of a museum as imagined by Blanchard and Bancel among others is even more paramount when one considers how France’s colonial past has been commemorated until now.

Commemoration of the Algerian War and French colonialism began as early as 1965, not long after Algeria was granted its independence. Sites and constructions paying homage to French Algeria began slowly cropping up in southern France after many former *Pieds-Noirs* and their families began settling there. In Nice a memorial was erected in 1973, “which paid tribute to Roger Degueldre, former head of Delta commandoes of the OAS,” with the

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

support of the local Mayor.²⁹⁴ In 1980 in Toulon, government officials even went as far as to inaugurate a six foot statue of a slain paratrooper in honor of the French army's effort to keep Algeria "French."²⁹⁵ The unveiling of this monument took place in the presence of 2,000 people, including many veterans and supporters of the new Front National party which had just begun gaining traction at the time. This trend of the "conquering of public space," as Blanchard and Bancel term it, on behalf of those who are nostalgic for the colonial period, continued even into the 1990s and 2000s. Specifically in 2002, a thirty-foot recreation of the *Notre-Dame-d'Afrique*, or a Catholic church constructed by *Pieds-Noirs* in Algiers, was built at Theoule-sur-mer.²⁹⁶ The mini-church was inscribed with the message: "For all those who died defending French Algeria." Perhaps what is truly worth remarking is that no commemorations made to Algerian soldiers who were tortured, civilians who were murdered, or immigrants who arrived in France to aid in the reconstruction process following World War II were raised following decolonization. However, in 2005 a project to create a Museum of the History of France in Algeria gained momentum and was slated to be constructed in Montpellier. Unfortunately, this turned into yet another project to valorize a "positive teaching" of the colonial experience. It was spearheaded by Daniel Lefeuvre – a historian who frequently spoke against projects of "repentance" with regards to France's colonial past.²⁹⁷ But due to heated debates about the glorification of the French presence in Northern Africa and in wake of the 2005 *banlieue* riots, the project was abandoned. It is clear that even through physical recognition of its former relationship with Algeria, France is reluctant to

²⁹⁴ Bancel, Nicola and Pascal Blanchard. *Is a Colonial History Museum Politically Possible?* in Bancel, Nicolas, Pascal Blanchard, and Dominic Thomas. *The Colonial Legacy in France: Fracture, Rupture, and Apartheid* (Indiana, University of Indiana Press, 2017), 398.

²⁹⁵ Bancel and Blanchard, *Is a Colonial History Museum Politically Possible?*, Bancel, Nicolas, Pascal Blanchard, and Dominic Thomas, *The Colonial Legacy in France*, 399.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Bancel and Blanchard, *Is a Colonial History Museum Politically Possible?*, Bancel, Nicolas, Pascal Blanchard, and Dominic Thomas, *The Colonial Legacy in France*, 402.

depart from a stubborn narrative that places a complex and tense history in a simplistic, positive light.

What is actually positive however, is that France has begun to recognize its past history with slavery in recent years. A memorial to the abolition of slavery was created in Nantes in 2012 and museums have begun committing space to the history of bondage.²⁹⁸ The question remains, *shouldn't there also be consideration given to colonial history?* However, perhaps the bigger question to answer is, *is it feasible* to imagine the creation of a space that avoids “reducing history to a single dimension” and that unapologetically acknowledges France’s role in North Africa despite the current climate? Blanchard, Bancel, and Benjamin Stora, among other historians, believe a space of education is sorely needed, but recognize the difficulty posed by the “identity wars” taking place in France today.²⁹⁹ Their mission to realize a site of colonial history is still in the works, but as of now, the writing and dissemination of this history must do the heavy lifting. It is impossible to resolve conflict and to avoid the recreation of old systems of oppression without first acknowledging them, and then understanding them. As a friend of one of the accomplices to the 2015 attack on the Bataclan attack told the media,

I’m not convinced that these authorities really have any idea as to what is going on in these neighborhoods . . . Young people around here are searching for an identity . . . but they get no help. I’m quite surprised with this display of force from the authorities with no regard for the origins or root of the problem.³⁰⁰

The origins and the root of the problem are precisely what I have attempted to impart here – a history that is propelling hate crimes and radical terrorism as it continues to go undiscussed. The goal of the unearthing of this colonial history in Algeria is not to place blame or to

²⁹⁸ Bancel and Blanchard, *Is a Colonial History Museum Politically Possible?*, Bancel, Nicolas, Pascal Blanchard, and Dominic Thomas, *The Colonial Legacy in France*, 406-407.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ Bancel, Blanchard, and Thomas, *The Colonial Legacy in France*, 5.

shame France, but to affirm that ignoring it does not make it disappear. The Algerian War and the legacy of French colonialism cannot be made invisible – the memories are written on the walls of the *banlieues*, stitched into forbidden veils, and explode with the bombs of the excluded.

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